Graced, happy or virtuous?

Three female theological voices on God and human flourishing.

by Rozelle Robson

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Declaration

By submitting this thesis, I declare that the entirety of the work contained therein is my own original work, that I am the sole author thereof (unless to the extent explicitly otherwise stated), that reproduction and publication thereof by Stellenbosch University will not infringe any third party rights and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it for obtaining any qualification.

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Abstract

The Yale Center for Faith and Culture has held seven Consultations on God and Human Flourishing, 2007 to 2013, where it was affirmed that human relation to God is reason enough for human flourishing. The seven consultations indicate a growing conversation on God and human flourishing in theology. With this is mind the three female theologians are considered and argued to be important as participants in a conversation on God and human flourishing. The three female theologians are Serene Jones, a feminist theologian, Ellen Charry a systematic-pastoral theologian, and Jennifer Herdt, a virtue ethicist.

Serene Jones is presented in the thesis as the first voice to engage theologically with the notions of happiness and human flourishing from a feminist critical position. Serene Jones argues, by means of feminist theory, that gendered constructions of women's nature are present in readings of doctrine and Scripture. The way in which happiness and human flourishing is understood to characterise the lives of women is consequently challenged and critiqued. Due to the oppressive logic inherent in gender insensitive readings of doctrine and Scripture, Serene Jones opts for a re-reading where the agency of women is affirmed. The doctrines of justification and sanctification are re-formulated by Serene Jones as justifying and sanctifying grace. Grace is described by Serene Jones as an envelope that enfolds the substance of women, presenting women with a redemptive narrative that they are able to identify with. Serene Jones' contribution lies in her affirmation of the graced agency of women.

Ellen Charry, a female theologian who is concerned with the salutary effect of knowledge on an individual represents the second voice. Ellen Charry understands the dichotomy between goodness and pleasure established by modernity to be false. In the notion of *asherism* Ellen Charry seeks to bridge the gap by asserting that obedience to God's commandments evokes both goodness and pleasure. Pleasure is described as the enjoyment of God and creation. Ellen Charry goes further by affirming that God enjoys creation when creation flourishes. A mutual enjoyment between God and creation takes place which brings about a happy disposition. Happiness accordingly is a way of life established through a particular knowledge of God attained when one obeys God's norm for living. In addition, happiness is not just marked by an excellent life but also by the enjoyment of both God and creation. Ellen Charry contributes to the conversation by affirming that happiness is established when humans and God flourish.

Jennifer Herdt, a virtue ethicist, starts with the secularisation of moral thought present since the sixteenth century. The secularisation of moral thought caused morality to be separated from its religious moorings. A shift in emphasis occurred, moving from the person doing the action to the action itself. With this shift in emphasis the possibility of virtue to bring humans into relation with God through grace was negated. The result was a recapitulated Augustinian anxiety of acquired virtue. Jennifer Herdt seeks to negate the Augustinian anxiety by returning the emphasis to the agent of the action. Jennifer Herdt delineates an account of mimetic performance, where she argues that by imitating a divine exemplar through virtue, grace progressively brings one into relation with God. Virtue is a means by which an individual partakes in and is formed by a liturgy. As virtue is practiced the agent participates in God, an act denoting happiness. Jennifer Herdt's account of human happiness takes into consideration how virtue assimilates an agent to Christ.

From the three female perspectives, happiness and human flourishing is understood to pertain to one's relation to God, a perspective which resonates with the God and Human Flourishing Consultations. In light of the female theological contributions, the suggestion that each female theological voice may be important for a diverse conversation on God and human flourishing as well as future initiatives for God and Human Flourishing is warranted.

Opsomming

Die "Yale Center for Faith and Culture" het sewe konsultasies gehad, 2007 tot 2013, oor "God and Human Flourishing" waar daar beklemtoon is dat die menslike verhouding tot God genoegsame rede is vir menslike florering. Die sewe konsultasies weerspieël 'n toenemende gesprek oor God en menslike florering in teologie. Dié toenemende gesprek het daartoe gelei dat drie vroulike stemme geidentifiseer word en geargumenteer word dat hulle belangrike deelnemers in 'n gesprek rondom God en menlike florering is. Die drie vroulike stemme is Serene Jones, 'n feministiese teoloog, Ellen Charry, 'n sistematies-pastorale teoloog, en Jennifer Herdt, 'n deugde etikus.

Serene Jones word in die tesis eerste aangebied om teologies, vanuit 'n feministies kritiese oogpunt, in gesprek te tree met die konsepte van geluk en menslike florering. Serene Jones argumenteer, deur middel van feministiese teorie, dat geslagskonstruksies van vrouens se natuur teenwoordig is in die lees van die Bybel en leerstellings. Die konsepte van geluk en florering, wat beskrywende woorde is, moet daarom ook krities gelees word en by tye uitgedaag word. Weens die geslags onsensitiewe lees van die Bybel en leerstellinge, onderneem Serene Jones om die leerstellings van regverdiging en heiligmaking te heroorweeg, met die klem op vrouens se agentskap. Die leerstelllings van regverdiging en heiligmaking word heroorweeg en benoem as geregverdigde en geheiligde genade. Genade word deur Serene Jones beskryf as 'n koevert wat die wese van vrouens omvou. Vrouens word hiermee van 'n verlossingsnarratief voorsien waarmee hulle kan identifiseer. Serene Jones se bydrae lê dus in haar prioriteit teenoor vrouens se genadigde agentskap.

Ellen Charry, 'n vroue teoloog wat besorg is oor die pastorale effek van kennis, verteenwoordig die tweede stem. Ellen Charry is krities oor die tweedeling van goedheid en genot wat deur die modernisme ingestel is en beskou dit as vals. Deur die konsep van *asherisme* probeer Ellen Charry die tweedeling oorbrug deur te argumenteer dat gehoorsaamheid aan God se gebooie beide goedheid en genot meebring. Sy beskryf genot as die wedersydse plesier wat mense beleef wanneer hulle God geniet deur gehoorsaam te wees aan God. Ellen Charry gaan verder deur te verduidelik dat God ook die mensdom geniet wanneer die mensdom floreer en God daardeur floreer. Die wedersydse florering van beide skepping en God bring 'n gelukkige disposisie mee. Geluk word vervolgens beskryf as 'n manier van leef, gebaseer op die uitlewing van die kennis wat deur God se gebooie geopenbaar word. Ellen Charry dra by tot die gesprek van geluk en florering deur die wedersydse genot wat mens en God beleef as kardinaal te beskou vir die verstaan van geluk.

Jennifer Herdt, 'n deugde etikus en die derde vroulike stem, begin met die verwêreldliking van moraliteit wat sedert die sestiende eeu teenwoordig is. Die verwêreldliking van morele nadenke het moraliteit en godsdiens van mekaar geskei. Die skeiding van moraliteit en godsdiens het tot gevolg gehad dat die klem verskuif is van die agent na handeling self. Met dié verskuiwing is die rol van genade om die agent geleidelik in gemeenskap met God te bring ondermyn. Die resultaat was die herhaling van die Augustiniese angs oor verkrygde deugde. Jennifer Herdt probeer die Augustiniese angs vermy deur die klem weer op die agent te laat val. Die konsep van nabootsende uitvoerings word deur Jennifer Herdt gebruik om te beskryf hoe die individu wat deugde beoefen, deur die nabootsing van Christus, toenemend in verhouding met God gebring word deur middel van genade. Deugde is 'n wyse waarop 'n persoon deelneem aan en gevorm word deur 'n bepaalde liturgie. Wanneer die persoon deugde beoefen, word daar deelgeneem aan God deur Christus, 'n daad wat geluk vergestalt. Jennifer Herdt se weergawe van menslike geluk neem in ag hoe 'n persoon geassimileer word tot God deur deugde te beoefen.

Deur die drie vroulike stemme se bydrae word daar verstaan dat geluk en die florering van mense verband hou met hulle verhouding tot God, 'n perspektief wat resoneer met die "God and Human

Flourishing Consultations." In die lig van die onderskeie vroulik teologiese bydrae, is die voorstel dat elke stem belangrik is vir 'n gediversifiseerde gesprek oor God en menslike florering so wel as toekomstige initiatiewe waar daar besin word oor God en menslike florering geregverdig.

Acknowledgements

Amidst the myriad answers to the question of human happiness, an uncommodified, theological rendition captured my imagination.

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Thanks is due to my supervisor, Nadia Marais, who patiently taught me how to write systematically and coherently as well as Professor Dirkie Smit, my co-supervisor, who enthusiastically engaged with my research and inspired me to think beyond the apparent.

Research does not always make one happy, as it challenges, critiques and deconstructs one's worldviews. For this reason it is appropriate to thank my mother, father and husband for their support and encouragement.

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On God and human flourishing

1.1 Introduction

The question of happiness and human flourishing is one asked in various academic disciplines, yielding a diversity of perspectives. Some disciplines articulate their understanding in view of the health sciences and others in terms of the social sciences. A third category of voices, namely, theological reflection, has been added to the diversity of perspectives. In each instance a different rendition of happiness and human flourishing is brought to the fore.

An example of the growing conversation within theology is The God and Human Flourishing Consultations held from 2007 to present by the Yale Centre for Faith and Culture. Its contributions span from themes such as "Good Power- Divine and Human" (2007), "God's Power and Human Flourishing" (2008), "The Same God?" (2009), "Desire and Human Flourishing" (2010), "Happiness and Human Flourishing" (2011), "Joy and Human Flourishing" (2012) to "Respect and Human Flourishing" (2013).

The thesis is situated within the growing theological conversation on God and Human Flourishing. As three female voices engage with the notion of happiness and human flourishing a diversity of perspectives come to the fore. The thesis consequently makes a contribution to the growing conversation by indicating what three female theologians could possibly say about happiness and human flourishing when presented with the question "in which way do Serene Jones, Ellen Charry and Jennifer Herdt contribute to theology's engagement with happiness and human flourishing?" The three female voices form part of lively conversation while engaging distinctively from their own theological thought processes.

The concept "human flourishing", understood theologically, seeks to uphold and appreciate gender, health and theology respectively while bearing in mind their dynamic relation to another. As such Serene Jones, a feminist theologian warns the reader of the myriad ways in which gendered constructions can negate the flourishing of women. Ellen Charry, a pastoral-systematic theologian, underscores the importance of a life lived excellently and Jennifer Herdt, a virtue ethicist, understands the Christian narrative to provide a liturgy wherein individuals may flourish. In all three instances theology is the centre around which happiness and human flourishing may be formulated. In light of the Gender, Health and Theology pilot programme at the University of Stellenbosch, this intersection proves to be fruitful for the conversation.

One might be tempted to think that a theological reflection minds itself only with the apparently theological. This, however, is not the case. A theological reflection on happiness and human flourishing is one marked by collaboration; where theory and theology are complementary to another. Here, an individual is understood in relation to self, society, ecology and God. Happiness and human flourishing, from a theological perspective, accordingly asks how one's relating to others and self either affirms happiness and flourishing or negates it. In addition, it is asked "how is this relation constitutive of happiness and human flourishing?"

The question of happiness and human flourishing is one asked by a variety of disciplines. In each case, the account reflects the presiding presuppositions within the discipline. Theological reflection presents a rendition of happiness that is dynamic and ever changing. Three female theologians who are believed to contribute to the question of happiness and human flourishing will be considered. In no way should their contributions be understood as contradicting the other, instead, complementarity is

key. It is to be expected that a difference in opinions might exist. This however serves to enrich instead of subvert.

1.2 The three female voices

Serene Jones, Ellen Charry and Jennifer Herdt are three female theologians who have in some way joined the theological conversation on human flourishing. Serene Jones is a Yale graduate and former professor at Yale (1991-2008), Ellen Charry, a Luce post-doctoral fellow at Yale Divinity School (1989-1991) and Jennifer Herdt, Professor of Christian Ethics at Yale Divinity School since 2010.

The first female theologian is Serene Jones, who is President and Johnston Family Professor for religion and democracy at Union Theological Seminary. Prior to accepting a lecturing position at Union Theological Seminary Serene Jones studied and taught at Yale Divinity School, where she acquired her PhD in 1999. She taught at Yale Divinity School for 17 years (Waddle, 2010). Jones notes that her relationship to Yale Divinity School extends beyond teaching to the formative years when her father was pursuing his B.D and PhD at Yale Divinity School. She states that, "after twenty-six years, Yale has seeped into my bones" (Babakian, 2010).

Serene Jones describes her teaching style as follows (Waddle, 2010):

> What I spend most of my time doing is trying to engage and expand [students'] imaginations and hence their deepest desires. I teach and write to their imaginative universes - to the landscape of images, expectations, and possibilities that form the dramatic mental worlds in which their thoughts unfold.

Jones was involved in a few "exciting collaborative endeavours" at Yale Divinity School (Waddle, 2010). Waddle further indicates that Jones worked "interdisciplinary with the Faculty of Law and Arts and Sciences. She was particularly involved in The Department of Religious Studies, The Department of African American Studies, and The Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies program" (Waddle, 2010). Jones describes the Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies program as "a community marked by academic earnestness and lively intellectual commitment" (Waddle, 2010).

Serene Jones understands her theological contribution as culminating from the lived experiences of her church community, students and Tuesday-night group (Jones, 2000: ii). In total, Serene Jones has published 37 articles and three books, including: *Trauma and Grace: Theology in a Ruptured World* (2009), *Feminist Theory and Christian Theology: Cartographies of Grace* (2000) and *Calvin and the Rhetoric of Piety* (1995). She also co-edited, *Feminist and Womanist Essays in Reformed Dogmatics* (Pauw & Jones, 2006), *Constructive Theology: A Contemporary Engagement with Classical Themes* (Jones & Lakeland, 2005), *Liberating Eschatology: Essays in Honour of Letty Russell* (1999) and *Setting the Table: Women Theological Conversation* (Nakashima, Camp & Jones, 1995) (Waddle, 2010).

She also serves as full time minister at the Disciples of Christ Church and the United Church of Christ (Jones, 2000:10), which testifies to her commitment to be an "imparter of faith" instead of only a "scholar of faith" (Babakian, 2010). Intellectual rigor without spiritual rigor leads to a situation where "students, as a result, do not always have mentors who can guide them on a journey that is both spiritual and intellectual," argues Jones (Babakian, 2010).

On the 1st of July 2008, Serene Jones began her career as the President of Union Theological Seminary in New York, where she was the first female president in 172 years. Jones motivates her acceptance of the position at Union Theological Seminary by stating that, "what you see happening globally parallels what was happening 500 years ago when this little guy named John Calvin got run out of

Paris" (Babakian, 2010). Genine Babakian observes the parallel Jones makes to the context of Calvin (Babakian, 2010):

> She points to many forces that are challenging people and communities of faith: The battle scars of violence, the often-divisive influence of religion and the economic problems that pushed many to the brink of poverty and increased the suffering of those already living on the edge.

Serene Jones' orientation toward happiness and flourishing is captured in an interview done by Bill Moyer in the television show "The Journal", which hints at an uncommodified rendition of happiness. Jones is recorded telling Bill Moyer (Babakian, 2010):

> Today's crisis is a crisis of values, we can never underestimate the crisis of desire. Turbo-capitalism takes over your desire, turning you into a creature who wants commodities. But in churches another kind of desire should be being crafted. That's where you can get in their bones and really begin to force the question: What makes you happy?

She also assigns a similar role to graduate students entering communities of faith whose orientation needs "to be less about moral obligation and more about delight" (Babakian, 2010).

The second female theologian that will be discussed is Ellen Charry, a Margaret W. Harmon Professor of Theology at Princeton Theological Seminary, where she teaches an array of classes from an introduction to Systematic Theology to Judaism, Christianity and interreligious dialogue. Her interest in theology developed from her first position as a social worker. In an interview with Ellen Charry for *Christianity Today*, it is conveyed: "She was a social worker in New York and Philadelphia who became dissatisfied with the purely practical nature of her work. Searching for a way to 'put my feet and my head together,' Charry found her way to Temple University's Department of Religion" (Stafford, 1999: 47).

Ellen Charry is described as "a pert woman whose words seem to come out of her mouth entangled with her whole life. You can't listen to Charry for long without noticing that she is very smart, but not showoff smart. She seems to care about everything and everybody—especially about how God helps people" (Stafford, 1999: 47). A similar line of thinking runs through Ellen Charry's book *By the renewing of your minds: The pastoral function of Christian doctrine* (1997a), where she sought to deconstruct the way one thinks about God in order to bring forth a reading of Scripture that transforms the mind.

Ellen Charry reminds the reader: "I am interested in the flourishing of people because I am a mother!" (Stafford, 1999: 47) The Stafford describes Charry's motivation as (Stafford, 1999: 47):

> the experience of motherhood gave her an insight into the character of God: that he wants us to flourish. Therefore theology, which teaches us to know God, must nourish human lives. That is a notion wildly at variance with the world-view of theologians in the last few hundred years. Theology is more usually about getting things right, establishing a system of truth, and protecting against error. Charry is concerned with those matters, too, but she believes the point of the exercise is to help people. And so it was, she contends, for Christian theologians through most of history.

In 2010, Ellen Charry contributed to the conversation on happiness when she wrote the book *God and the art of happiness* (2010). At the Interfaith Summit on Happiness, Ellen Charry states: "it is true that we have had a glut of books on happiness but we have not had happiness from theologians and particularly not from Christian theologians" (*Reflections on the Interfaith Summit on Happiness, 2010*). Charry motivates her reason for writing on happiness further (*Reflections on the Interfaith Summit on Happiness*, 2010):

> I thought about happiness and why I wanted to write about happiness from a distinctively Christian perspective but even more so from an Augustinian perspective. The reason I concluded was that Christians are skittish to talk about happiness because some Christians perceive happiness and goodness to be in tension with one another. If Christians have a choice between being happy and being good they want to be good and they are willing to forego happiness in order to be good and obedient.

She continues to describe her rationale in the following manner (*Reflections on the Interfaith Summit on Happiness*, 2010):

> I wanted to move through the dualism (between goodness and piety) and find 'a both-and' in the middle. To do so I went, in all honesty, to the Bible. The word *ashrey* came up which depicts a biblical understanding of what it means to be happy. I think it is both appropriate for the Jewish and Christian tradition. What I concluded is that the Jewish and Christian traditions are very interested in having people obedient to God, that is to say, the way of life God puts forth for us in Scripture and the tradition's elaboration of Scripture which is meant to offer a way of life. A good way of life. A way of life that is both for the well-being of the community and that in enabling the creation to flourish God is pleased with us for being obedient to enabling creation to flourish. When we enable the creation to flourish, we flourish. When we flourish in that way, we are happy. We and God enjoy one another, enjoying creation.

Ellen Charry's consideration of happiness through flourishing is premised on the creation account in Genesis 1, where God creates in order that creation may flourish (*Reflections on the Interfaith Summit on Happiness*, 2010).

The literature that has developed from Ellen Charry's concern for the flourishing of creation is in total: six books, thirty-one essays, thirty-two articles, excluding her contributions as editor of *Theology Today* from 1997-2004, and her contributions to academic and ecclesial services. Charry is currently involved in a theological commentary on Psalms 1-50 (Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible, 2013).

The third female theologian to be discussed is Jennifer Herdt, who is the Gilbert A. Stark Professor of Christian Ethics, Associate Dean of Academic Affairs at Yale Divinity School. Courses taught by Herdt include Political Theology, Virtue and Hypocrisy and Imago Dei and Human Dignity. Prior to teaching at Yale Divinity School, Herdt taught at the University of Notre Dame for ten years.

The Yale Divinity School profile on Jennifer Herdt describes her interests as including early-modern and modern moral thought, classical and contemporary virtue ethics, and contemporary Protestant social ethics and political theology (Waddle, 2011). Herdt has been the "recipient of Carey Senior Fellowship at the Erasmus Institute (2004–2005), a postdoctoral fellowship from the Centre for Philosophy of Religion (1998–99), a Mellon Graduate Prize Fellowship from the University Centre for Human Values at Princeton University (1992), and a Mellon Fellowship in the Humanities (1989)" (Waddle, 2011).

In an interview done with Ray Waddle, Jennifer Herdt describes how her reflection on social structures and social moral order started from as early as childhood (Waddle, 2011). Waddle recalls (2011):

> At age 5, she and her family moved from the American Midwest to the Philippines and saw poverty on a global scale. Her father, an agricultural economist, took a position there to work with an international team of researchers to create new, productive strains of rice to improve harvests and ease the crisis of world hunger.

Waddle quotes Jennifer Herdt (Waddle, 2011):

> I saw so much abject poverty all around me there. It gave me a strong feeling of gratitude for all that we had – also a strong sense of the contingency of my condition: I just happened to be born into a family that was not poor. This really impressed on me a sense of social responsibility. But I learned other things too. Even among the very poor we saw resilience, a capacity to be joyful despite their conditions. I certainly felt like it was a gift they had given me: they could teach me something about joy.

The sense of social responsibility continued in Jennifer Herdt's studies with an understanding that "people secretly are eager to contribute to society's improvement in ways that transcend self-orientated materialism" (Waddle, 2011). This notion of the "common good" is under threat, argues Herdt, with the increase of individualism and materialism. "This 'thinning' tendency might be inevitable under pluralism: people fall back on subjective desires and values because notions of public virtue sound too ambitious or intolerant. Strident individualism intensifies the trend, insisting that society's task is to maximise individual autonomy and preferences, not contemplate the common good" (Waddle, 2011).

Despite the increase of individualism and materialism, Jennifer Herdt holds fast to a communal understanding of the common good. She argues that "we must grapple together. Strict individualism is a utopian fantasy. Life has an irreducible social dimension. A commitment to the common good involves organising social structures so that they "foster the flourishing of everyone" (Waddle, 2011). The belief in the inevitably social dimension of human flourishing motivates Herdt to assert that: "Human beings are capable of finding their happiness in contributing to the common good. I think people are dying to hear that" (Waddle, 2011).

As a member of the Episcopalian denomination, Jennifer Herdt places the responsibility on the church to provide an example of the common good through the performance of its sacraments and liturgy. Grace plays a central role in this process, Herdt indicates in her book *Putting on Virtue* (2012b: 119):

> Grace is active in our acting, in the beauty of virtue displayed that engages and transforms our affections, allowing us to play a part that becomes our own as we play it. While imitation is an act, there is also a chastening of human agency implied in the cascade. We must be inspired by our exemplars: we cannot simply decide to love them, to find them beautiful.

A variety in the depictions of the common good, seen in cultural appropriations of happiness and flourishing does not threaten Jennifer Herdt's concern for the common good. Instead, Herdt affirms: "People will differ over definitions of the common good, but it's much better that people bring out their robust views for healthy debate and attempt to find common ground than it is to retreat into individual preferences and public silence" (Waddle, 2011). It is this very grappling with various conceptions of the common good that is seen in Herdt's articles and books, including *Putting on virtue: The legacy of the splendid vices* (2010) and *Religion and faction in Hume's moral philosophy* (1997).

Serene Jones, a President and Johnston Family Professor for religion and democracy at Union Theological Seminary, points toward an uncommodified rendition of happiness which takes into consideration human agency. Ellen Charry, a Margaret W. Harmon Professor of Theology at Princeton Theological Seminary, indicates that Christians are skittish to talk about happiness because "some Christians perceive happiness and goodness to be in tension with one another" (*Reflections on*

the Interfaith Summit on Happiness, 2010). Jennifer Herdt, who is the Gilbert A. Stark Professor of Christian Ethics, Associate Dean of Academic Affairs at Yale Divinity School, asserts that humans are able to find their happiness by contributing to the common good. The three female theologians with their priority toward human happiness and flourishing contribute to the growing conversation on God and human flourishing.

1.3 Motivation for female voices

Serene Jones, Ellen Charry and Jennifer Herdt represent three female theologians who may be added to the conversation on human flourishing and happiness presented in the God and Human Flourishing Consultations. Their addition is worthy to be considered for two reasons. The first is their position as female theologians. Secondly, each female voice either taught or studied at Yale Divinity School. Serene Jones lived, studied and taught at Yale Divinity for a cumulative 26 years. Ellen Charry is a Luce Post-Doctoral fellow (1989-1991) at Yale Divinity School and Jennifer Herdt is currently a Professor of Christian Ethics at Yale Divinity School.

In light of the diversity of perspectives on human flourishing, one may infer the nature of each female voice's distinctive contribution. Serene Jones, President of Union Theological Seminary in New York, brings to the conversation the awareness that talk of happiness and human flourishing necessarily concerns the way women's nature have been constructed through theological misappropriations of doctrine and Scripture. She engages with feminist theory to reinterpret the Reformed tradition and describes the collaboration of theology and feminist theory as "companionable wisdoms" (Jones, 2000: ix), where four central moments define the collaboration: (a) "the communal content of struggle" where community is of "paramount importance"; a (b) "pragmatic utilitarian"[1] orientation; (c) a critical disposition towards "the myriad ways gender relations of power inform our most fundamental patterns of thought and practice; and finally, (d) whether theory or theology "contributes to the betterment of women's lives" (Jones, 2001c:297).

Read in light of the conversation on happiness, Serene Jones cautions against any rendition of happiness that does not take into consideration how women's lives have been constructed by oppression and gendered patterns of thought (Jones, 2000:3). Oppression, for Jones, is the very antithesis of human flourishing and defies the will of God that all creation should flourish (Jones, 2000:109). As a feminist theologian, who wants to work from the Reformed tradition, she re-narrates the doctrine of justification and sanctification to affirm the agency of women (Jones, 2009:160). As a theologian, Serene Jones has a priority toward grace as catalyst of the agency of women (Jones, 2002:64) and as a feminist she affirms the emancipation of women.

Ellen Charry, Margaret W. Harmon Professor of Theology at Princeton Theological Seminary, brings a priority for a salutary reading of Scripture to the conversation. It is Charry's belief that knowledge of God shapes the becoming of an individual (2004b:26), which informs her understanding of happiness. Charry's study of Augustine, who she terms the "father of Christian Psychology", motivated her to come to this conclusion (2006b:575). Charry explains (2001a:126):

> I have argued that Christian psychology and secular psychology part company over the relevance of God. Christian psychology claims that we are made in the divine image but fallen from that basic identity, that on our own we are lost and confused. Our true identity is reclaimed for us by God in Christ so that we may return to our proper self. This is the healing of the soul. Secular psychology grounds the self in itself.

[1]"…in that we recognize the role that a normative vision of 'the-way-things-should-be' plays in motivating these communities to struggle for social change" (Jones, 2001c:297).

> The self is autonomous; it does not need God either to understand itself or to chart a path to true happiness and emotional and behavioural stability.

Ellen Charry also provides a corrective to secular psychology (2001a:129):

> Augustine's view is that desire is easily deformed. He saw that we are caught between our worst self, which brings false happiness, and our best self, which brings true happiness yet lies dormant under our futile attempts to follow our own lights. The struggle for goodness and happiness is a spiritual one that will finally be resolved not through any short-term pleasure but only in a life pleasing to God, to whom we are indissolubly tethered and whose grace alone makes life possible.

Ellen Charry's contribution to the conversation on happiness lies in her belief that God wills creation to flourish (2011a:34) and beyond that, that the flourishing of creation is enjoyable to God (*Reflections on the interfaith Summit on Happiness*, 2010). Premised on the doctrine of creation in Genesis 1.27, she asserts that God has created human kind to live in a particular way, one that is *ashrey* (*Reflections on the interfaith Summit on Happiness*, 2010). When individuals come to the knowledge that God wills their happiness and has set out a norm by which they are to live, happiness follows (*Reflections on the interfaith Summit on Happiness*, 2010).

As a theologian who is concerned with the salutary effect of knowledge of God on humans, Ellen Charry challenges any conception of happiness that is abstract and premised solely on an eschatological conception of happiness.

Jennifer Herdt, Professor of Christian Ethics at Yale Divinity School, contributes to the theological conversation on happiness by means of virtue ethics. Herdt takes issue with the divide that occurred between morality and its religious moorings present since the sixteenth century, a divide which rendered theology superfluous to conceptions of the common good. In her approach, Jennifer Herdt does not make happiness the priority of her study, but instead treats it as a natural extension of human participation in God and the greater good. She regards virtue as the forum wherein grace actively draws the agent toward its origin, namely God. Herdt establishes that (2012b:55, 60):

> virtue is not the way I demonstrate to God that I am worthy of the reward of eternal life: rather, virtue proves to be nothing but the perfection of the love of God. And it is when my love to God is perfected that I can experience the union with God, which is fruition, the love of enjoyment. Virtue proves after all to be not just instrumental but partially constitutive of my happiness, of my final end … My final end is not just external: even though I cannot in this life fully realize that loving union with God, my loving, virtuous activity is even now an expression of the love of God. Finally, it is through the Christian's responsiveness to grace that *mimesis* may take place, permeating every act done by Christians.

Happiness, as intricately connected to morality and its religious moorings, has ethical implications for the agent of virtue. As a virtue ethicist, Jennifer Herdt warns that happiness cannot be understood apart from morality. She affirms (Herdt, 2012b: 57):

> Happiness is found not in achieving independence but in embracing our ultimate dependency … while our final good is not fully up to us, it is something that requires our active participation: it is not something that we simply passively undergo. If virtue is the perfection of my love for God, the end of enjoyment of God cannot be fully characterized apart from my virtuous activity, my loving response to God. We find happiness in the perfected activity of receiving and returning God's gifts.

Serene Jones, Ellen Charry and Jennifer Herdt contribute to the conversation on happiness from a feminist, pastoral and virtue ethics perspective, which is arguably not taken into consideration by the

God and Human Flourishing Consultation. This thesis aims to understand in which ways each respective voice could contribute to the conversation on happiness.

Serene Jones as a feminist and theologian begins the conversation in Chapter 2, where feminist theory with its critical disposition toward constructed essentials cautions the use of the word "happiness." In light of the God and Human Flourishing Consultations, Chapter 2 investigates how a feminist theologian reads and interprets the notion of happiness. Ellen Charry as a female theologian, who is not a feminist, moves beyond the moment of critique to understand happiness as a way of life. Chapter 3 consequently seeks to understand how knowledge of God enables a particular understanding of happiness. Chapter 4 shows how knowledge of God and human agency form part of virtuous acting where Jennifer Herdt delineates how virtue as mimetic performance constitutes happiness. The final chapter, Chapter 5, asks whether a particular theological understanding of happiness is distinguishable.

The order of voices in this thesis, namely, Serene Jones first, Ellen Charry second and Jennifer Herdt third, serve to move the reader from one conversation to the next. Serene Jones is first in the conversation on happiness because she cautions against reigning gendered patterns of thought and how these patterns influence interpretation and meaning. It is accomplished by Jones' use of feminist theory, which deconstructs the notion of happiness and affirms the agency and freedom of women. In accordance with a feminist theological reading of happiness, she transitions from the moment of critique to a vision of happiness premised on the doctrine of justification and sanctification. Feminist theology enables the reader to engage critically with the God and Human Flourishing Consultations, before moving on to an understanding of happiness premised on knowledge of God and virtue. In addition, Serene Jones equips the reader with the necessary awareness to engage with Ellen Charry and Jennifer Herdt respectively.

Ellen Charry, the second voice in the theological conversation, describes happiness as a way of life premised on the affirmation of human freedom and agency. Happiness as a way of life is understood to be the process whereby knowledge of God evokes enjoyment through conformation to God's commandments. Charry moves beyond Serene Jones' conception of happiness in two ways. In the first instance, she understands human agency and freedom to be the precondition for *asherism.* Secondly, Charry moves beyond the notion of happiness as a state of being marked by the absence of oppression, to happiness as a way of life.

Jennifer Herdt arguably marks a culmination in female voices in her understanding of happiness. Herdt, similar to Ellen Charry and Serene Jones, affirms the agency and freedom of human beings through the notion of virtue. In addition, she understands knowledge of God to be a liturgy that individuals partake in when they act virtuously. Stated differently, when a Christian acts virtuously premised on knowledge of God, the agency of that individual is affirmed. Jennifer Herdt consequently furthers the contribution of both Serene Jones and Ellen Charry respectively in her understanding that virtue, whether secular or Christian, is a means by which through grace we are brought into relation with God. Happiness becomes more than a way of life or the absence of life negating circumstances to a way of relating to the world and God by means of virtue.

The three female theologians have different emphases when talking about happiness and human flourishing that leads to a diversity of perspectives. Serene Jones emphasises the agency of women, Ellen Charry, the shaping potential of knowledge of God on happiness and Jennifer Herdt, how virtue is a means to participate in God and contribute to the common good. In light of the diversity of perspectives some research considerations are to be made.

1.4 Research considerations

This thesis is situated within the context of the Gender, Health and Theology pilot program launched in 2013 by the Church of Sweden in partnership with Stellenbosch University, the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Makumira University College and the Ethiopian Graduate School of Theology. The initiative was launched as a forum for study on themes pertaining to the millennium development goals, namely, the child mortality rate and the improvement of maternal health. With the millennium development goals in mind, the question of happiness and human flourishing was one to be considered. Three distinctive voices were chosen who, in their unique way, could contribute to the theological conversation on happiness. Furthermore, in consideration of the Pilot Program where an emphasis was placed on gender, health and theology respectively, three female voices were chosen to contribute to the continuing conversation on happiness. The research question asked is: "In which ways do Serene Jones, Ellen Charry and Jennifer Herdt contribute to theology's engagement with the themes of happiness and well-being?"

In any conversation, the diversity of conversation partners has the potential of either miscommunicating what needs to be said or negating a constructive conversation altogether. A similar challenge is presented to this study. There is a possibility that each voice's contribution to happiness is irreconcilable with the others. The possible irreconcilability need not be a problem; instead, a hostess is required who allows each voice its respective opinion and point of departure. The role that I am to assume in this thesis may perhaps be likened to the metaphor of a hostess. A hostess is one who shows hospitality to the other, who invites and welcomes. A similar role is assumed when inviting Serene Jones, Ellen Charry and Jennifer Herdt to the table. My role in the research is to allow each voice to speak in its own right while contributing to the greater conversation. In the unlikely instance where the voices may perhaps be irreconcilable, one may recall the dynamic of a conversation, namely, sending a message, receiving the message and acknowledging its content.

The role of the hostess is not to decide what is right or wrong, but rather to enable the three different, sometimes contrasting, sometimes agreeing voices to speak to the topic of human flourishing. Each theological contribution employs a different method when arguing for happiness and human flourishing. In each instance the notion of happiness and human flourishing is developed in distinctive ways: Serene Jones, by means of feminist theology, Ellen Charry, in her pastoral-systematic approach and Jennifer Herdt, by means of virtue ethics. The term conversation and the exact role of a hostess therein might need some clarification. For this clarification one may turn to the matter of methodology.

1.5 Methodology

The research question, "In which ways do Serene Jones, Ellen Charry and Jennifer Herdt contribute to theology's engagement with the themes of happiness and well-being?" is approached from a systematic theological perspective. A systematic theological approach is represented by two moments, a literature study and therein the discovery of overarching or recurring themes which allow for the discovery of a leitmotif. By looking at the recurring themes present in each voice as well as the whole, a leitmotif in its singularity and plurality of perspectives comes to the fore. The leitmotif not only indicates the recurring themes but also suggests a possible conceptual framework. Premised on the conceptual framework at work in each respective voice a rendition of happiness and human flourishing may be retrieved.

In order to stay true to a literature study, I embark on the theological investigation by means of a close reading. A close reading suggests a mode of reading where attention is paid to logic, presuppositions, the agenda of the authors as well as their theological reservations. It characterises a careful and

consistent interpretation of the theological texts as a means by which the respective voices may be understood. The style of writing further seeks to stay true to a close reading by conveying the thoughts and processes of each voice. Throughout the investigation it will be an aim to respect each voice according to their style of writing, allowing each voice to set out their argument coherently. In light of this aim, it will be attempted to stay as close to the original text as possible. The thesis is proliferated with quotations as I have sought to interpret each voice with integrity. The use of quotations in the thesis is therefore deliberate and intended to guide the reader through the thought processes of each voice. It might be asked why I have not paraphrased some lengthy quotations? In such instances the particular quotation conveyed both meaning as well as providing the reader with a sense of the author's theological "presence".

After reading the three theological voices they may be juxtaposed. Juxtaposition takes the form of converging and diverging conversations. An opportunity is presented where rhetoric, style and theory may be contrasted or emphasised premised on the focus of each author. In this way a rich, textured account of happiness and human flourishing may be established. When interpreting the voices no account is deemed more adequate or relevant. For Serene Jones appropriately notes that human flourishing is always in a state of flux as it is dependent on the particular givenness of a context (2000:75). The question to the nature of happiness and human flourishing is one that permeates the study. In the end, the reader is presented with three renditions to the question. The focus then, is not to consider which theological account is more appropriate than the other, but rather to understand how each voice has intended to answer the question. The question of happiness and human flourishing is one that extends beyond the thesis to ask the reader and future theologians what its nature might be in their particular context.

What arises from the question asked to both author and implied audience is a growing conversation. In consideration of the dynamic interplay between the three female theological voices a conversation as possible forum for interaction seems viable. In a conversation the three female theological voices may be represented in their own right while relating to the other in a distinctive manner. When the three voices converse, new themes and appropriations are erected as diverging and converging perspectives enliven the textured account. It might also be the case that there are stark contrasts and possible contradictions within the varying accounts. If this be the case it would only serve to show how reflection on theological themes is context dependent and deeply embodied in the lives of the authors.

A conversation may also be attributed with negative characteristics such as power play and interpretive bias. For this reason I present each author with the same question, "in which ways does A, B or C contribute to *theology's* engagement with happiness and human flourishing?" This does not exclude the possible presence of the issues mentioned above but does begin by limiting the extent to which incoherent interpretation may take place. With regards to the issue of power play or preference, the ordering of the three female voices in no way suggests a hierarchy or primacy but is rather a method of helping the reader navigate through the theological investigation.

Feminist theology, Systematic-Pastoral theology and Moral theology are three lenses from which an account of happiness and human flourishing is read. Serene Jones is placed first in the conversation of three because she unpacks and develops the notion of human happiness extensively. Ellen Charry and Jennifer Herdt are ordered to continue the conversation by emphasising the transformative power of knowledge of God and the value of a Christian liturgy as forum for contributing to the common good. The conversation is a growing and continuing one and can therefore on no account be given preference. Instead, through every moment of reflection the meaning and extent of happiness and human flourishing is developed anew.

Finally, interpretive bias is perhaps the most difficult issue to avoid. An awareness of interpretive bias therefore encourages me to restrict my voice when interpreting the author's. I have excluded my opinion from the theological rendition for two reasons; the first being the dynamic and complex nature of the question which has as its result an ever-changing answer and the second being its dependence on context. A rendition that is constantly in flux and context dependent deprives me of the ability to make judgements. Interpretive bias is in this way circumvented due to the nature of the question itself.

The methodology for this thesis is a systematic theological literature study which has two moments, the establishment of a leitmotif present in each theological contribution wherein a conceptual framework is discovered. I have used the notion of a conversation to indicate a possible means by which the voices could be read in the presence of the other. In the theological investigation the research question will guide the reader through the dynamic and complex theological rendition. The interpretive task is left to the three voices who, when juxtaposed with the other, emphasise the nuances and differences. The conversation on happiness and human flourishing is indeed one that theology has begun to engage with extensively.

1.6 Conclusion

The aim of the first chapter has been to identify the conversation with its respective conversation partners. The conversation exists within a greater context of conversations on happiness and flourishing presented (amongst others) in the 2007 to 2013 Consultations of God and Human Flourishing at the Yale Center for Faith and Culture. It has been indicated that each respective voice has a unique relation to Yale Divinity School and seeks to understand how theology may engage with the notion of happiness.

Serene Jones as a feminist theologian introduces the need to account for women's voices in her critical disposition toward the construction of women's natures. Ellen Charry challenges the reader to critically consider the false dichotomy between piety and pleasure in the consideration of happiness. Jennifer Herdt reminds the reader that happiness has to do not only with one's relation to God, but also, with the agent contributing to the greater community through virtue.

The format of the thesis will be similar to a conversation, where each voice is heard respectively. Each voice will engage with the other to present a conversation on happiness where a diversity of perspectives is taken into consideration. A conversation which indicates both the nuances and differences of conceptions of happiness while remaining true to the agenda of each female theologian. This contribution to happiness and human flourishing serves to enrich growing conversations on God and human flourishing.

Chapter 2
Graced? Serene Jones on human flourishing

> In our minds, to be feminists means that, emboldened by our faith in God, we are actively seeking to build a world where all people, women and men alike, flourish, where God's creation is nurtured, and where God's will for justice, beauty, and mercy prevails. We ask what things presently (and in the past) hinder the flourishing of women: in this context, we are committed to looking at the causes of women's oppression (Jones, 2004a:260).

2.1 Introduction

Serene Jones is a feminist theologian who makes a contribution to theology's engagement with flourishing and happiness through her remapping of Christian theology with feminist theory. The former conceptualises the latter, whilst the latter contextualises the former (Jones, 2000:56). Jones insists in her book *Feminist theory and Christian theology* that (2000:2):

> Students of theology have much to learn from feminist theory … It deepens our understanding of human identity and community and opens up new avenues for understanding the Christian theological tradition and its view of divine grace.

Jones' theology is nuanced skilfully in the way she approaches both text and context (2006: 24):

> as a feminist with a pragmatic interest in social change, I found the aesthetic avenue of approach helpful because it required taking seriously the concrete practice, cultural patterns, and communal actions- and not just the reasoned ideas- that make us who we are.

An apt example of this is found in Serene Jones' contribution to the book *Feminist and Womanist essays in Reformed Dogmatics* (Pauw & Jones, 2006), where she employs the strategy of remapping the experiences of women in light of biblical texts. Jones uses the metaphor of a map (2000:10) to denote how feminist theory is superimposed onto Christian theology.

As a theologian, Serene Jones has a priority toward Scripture and doctrine and as a feminist she critiques traditions of doctrine and Scripture that harbour an oppressive logic for women. Oppression is deconstructed by Jones as anything that threatens the agency and freedom of a woman (Jones, 2000:74). Moreover, "feminist theory tries to hold its analysis of women's oppression in tension with an appreciation for both the flourishing of women and the complex 'givenness' of their multiple circumstances" (Jones, 2000:6).

Serene Jones develops her theory of flourishing established by the feminist vision of 'women's wholeness' (2006:75) premised on Iris Young's[2] theory of oppression (Young, 1990), a position described as an 'eschatological moment' (Jones, 2006:75). Jones affirms (2006:75):

> this vision functions as a yardstick against which the pains of the present are measured and critiqued. In theories of oppression, this measurement serve as a "regulative ideal," allowing one to assess the present against standards of justice, wholeness, and in the case of my definition, "flourishing."

Serene Jones presents to the conversation on happiness a position that simultaneously critiques and affirms. The Reformed tradition is utilised by Jones to construct a theological account of human

[2] Serene Jones draws on the work of Iris Young whom she references as follows: "see Iris Marion Young, *Justice and Politics of Difference* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1990), 125ff." (2000:183).

flourishing, which takes into consideration the "myriad ways gender relations of power inform our most fundamental patterns of thought and practice" (2001c:297).

In the remapping of Christian theology, Serene Jones employs feminist theory to critically engage with doctrine and Scripture, a method that takes into consideration both text and context. With a sensitivity toward the oppression of women, Serene Jones argues for a reading of doctrine and Scripture that affirms the agency of women. In her use of Christian theology and feminist theory, Serene Jones illustrates that theory and theology are what she terms, "companionable wisdoms" (Jones, 2000:34).

2.2 Companionable wisdoms

The act of superimposing feminist theory onto Christian theology is underscored in the subtitle to Serene Jones' book *Feminist theory and Christian theology: Cartographies of grace* (2000). Jones often likens her methodology to a map where a theological landscape resides; upon this landscape feminist theory is laid in order to mark out new routes for understanding (2000: ix) doctrine[3] (Jones, 2000:1):

> We read Scripture and reflect on what it means for us- exhausted women living in the new millennium- to believe in a triune God whose grace embraces us and opens us up to abundant life[4]

To "read" and "reflect" takes on a life of its own, as Serene Jones journeys through feminist theory and Christian theology. Jones remarks that, "Irigaray's[5] "alternative" is a position that tries to take seriously the gifts of critique and normativity" (2001a:54) at the level of method, content and cultural aesthetic (Jones, 2001a:54). Theory and theology are two companions in the work of Jones (Jones, 2001a:51):

> I argue that it is a relationship marked by two moments: embracing the gifts of critique and radical openness and, second, celebrating the gifts of normative structure and emancipatory vision.

The interplay of normative frameworks and its critique extends to Jones' reading of the Bible and doctrine, where words such as "boundedness" and "openness", "freedom" and "form", serve to characterise an alternative reading (Jones, 2000:2). Each alternative reading is strategically qualified for the implied readers. Serene Jones' focus falls on a multitude of audiences with whom she engages regularly. The diversity in audiences forms the bedrock for her readings: "These women remind me again and again that high theory and local wisdom make wonderful companions" (Jones, 2000:2).

Feminist theory equips Serene Jones with a critical disposition toward the construction of the identities of women. The result is the awareness of unquestioned readings of Scripture and doctrine,

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[3]Serene Jones utilises the metaphor of a map to describe how feminist theory and Christian theology may be companionable wisdoms: "Similarly, I am certain that in charting the central concepts that mark the worlds of feminist theory and Christian theology, I have left huge blank spaces in places where there is much more traffic than I had realized. When you find these places, fill them in and be bold enough to redraw the entire map if need be. Do so realizing, however, that maps are never simply open windows to the real: they are just as often blueprints for the 'real' that is being formed, the emergent terrain. In other words, maps create just as they are created" (Jones, 2000: ix).

[4] Serene Jones uses the notion of "flourishing" interchangeably with concepts that denote well-being and happiness. Within her writing such notions are finely nuanced with theology, theory and cultural norms, which are always interacting with one another as she uses the terms within certain contexts.

[5] Serene Jones provides three resources of Irigaray when speaking of her methodology, Jones writes, "See L. Irigaray, Speculum of the Other Woman, trans. G. Gill (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1985); idem, An Ethics of Sexual Difference, trans. C. Burke and G. Gill (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1993); idem, Sexes and Genealogies, trans. G. Gill (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993)" (2001a: 53).

which has had an oppressive logic. The readings are accordingly deconstructed and reformulated to establish an emancipatory reading of women's nature. It is Jones' conviction that feminist theology has an important contribution to make to the world of feminist studies.

In her article "Companionable Wisdoms: What insights might feminist theorists gather from feminist Theologians", Serene Jones describes the relevance of feminist theology for feminist engagement (2001). The unique contribution of feminist theology begins with the "common story" it shares with feminist theory, where "four central moments" exist (Jones, 2001c:297). These are (a) "the communal content of struggle" where community is of "paramount importance"; a (b) "pragmatic utilitarian"[6] orientation; (c) a critical disposition towards "the myriad ways gender relations of power inform our most fundamental patterns of thought and practice"; and finally, (d) whether theory or theology "contributes to the betterment of women's lives" (Jones, 2001c:297).

Since the postmodern "disenchantment with the Enlightenment", feminist theorists, deconstructivists, as well as communitarians, have found themselves bound to normative frameworks without pragmatic outcomes (Jones, 2001c:298). The result is twofold; theorists "find themselves uncertain about how they should proceed when crafting constructive proposals" and "over the past twenty years … it has increasingly distanced itself from the communities that initially inspired its eschatological yearnings[7]" (Jones, 2001c:298). The relationship between the "academy" and the "emancipatory communities of struggle" has thus been separated (Jones, 2001c:298).

Feminist theology on the other hand, "has not lost touch with the communities and the normative traditions that inspire its eschatological yearnings" (Jones, 2001c:298) and facilitates them to "manage the messiness of normative claims in the context of its pragmatic eschatology and its correlative understanding of grace" (Jones, 2001c:299). Feminist theorists have critiqued theology however, for its "unchecked gendered patterns" (Jones, 2001c:299) and for "constructing essentials[8]" of women's nature (Jones, 2001c:299). Instead of seeing feminist theory and feminist theology as contradictory (Jones, 2001c:301), Serene Jones suggests that they are instead companionable wisdoms (2000:34).

Serene Jones argues for the potential of doctrine to have "two very different imagistic economies standing together as markers of a single self" (2001c:301). The example she uses is the doctrine of justification and sanctification with its corollary "potential to critically undo whilst organically constructing identity through grace" (Jones, 2000:55) illustrates a concern for the agency of women (Jones, 2008a:330):

> Therefore much of the work that captivates me lies in the realm of grace and the particular experiences of persons whose agency and hope have been fractured by violence – another version of the wretched of the earth, I suppose.

In the particular context of sin, later read as "grace-denied" (Jones, 2000:117), Serene Jones affirms, "implicated in a sin from which we cannot fully disentangle ourselves we stand here, *simul iustus et peccator*, persons who are unceasingly marked by sin and yet are freed from it through the counter-discourse of grace" (2001c:301). She describes the self, community and oppression in light of sin, which is the origin of the brokenness of humanity (Jones, 2000:55). Jones writes (2001c:301):

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[6] "…in that we recognize the role that a normative vision of "the-way-things-should-be" plays in motivating these communities to struggle for social change" (Jones, 2001c:297).
[7] Serene Jones calls this the "originary normative moment" (2001c:298).
[8] "Essentials" refer here to those "characteristics" that are believed to be innate in women's nature and immune to change throughout history (Jones, 2000:42).

> With respect to gender and the oppression of women, we are thus doubly marked as persons (both men and women) who are deeply implicated in its oppressive logic- as both perpetrators and victims- yet also called to live in a grace that affirms the ultimate flourishing of women. We thus stand here, affirming our agency as both a willing tool of sin and as resister of sin.

Normative theological constructs provide the opportunity where re-interpretations may be made without harbouring "implicit exclusion or subjugation" (Jones, 2001c:302). Instead, apparent theological binaries work "paradoxically (as opposed to parasitically), providing a methodological advantage to theological engagement" (Jones, 2001c:303). Jones argues (2001c:302):

> So, for example, one does not choose whether to live in sin or under grace: one lives in the tension of having been simultaneously overcome by both. Further, one's starting point for talking about this paradoxical condition depends on one's rhetorical context and purpose. Thus, each pair, as pair, has a strategically malleable nature that benefits from the implicit and positive inclusion of both terms.

In her article "Bounded Openness: Postmodernism, Feminism and the Church Today", Serene Jones presents in a similar fashion the unique contribution of theology's engagement with feminist theory and postmodernism. She states: "Postmodern sensibilities need to be combined with a bold willingness to stake claims, to make normative judgments, to build structure-both conceptual and material- that enable human beings to flourish and live as God intended" (Jones, 2001b:50). The "strange relationship" that exists between feminist theology and feminist theory or postmodernism, highlights the value of "Christian theology's unwavering commitment to normative reflection" (Jones, 2001b:52).

Feminist theory shares a "common goal, namely, the liberation of women … (it) represents a form of oppositional political action, albeit one with unique tools" (Jones, 2000:3). The initial focus was on forms of oppression "that structured women's lives" and an imagining of "an alternative future without oppression" (Jones, 2000:3). Serene Jones adds: "What soon became apparent, however, was that oppression is not always easy to name" (2000:3). Feminist theory consequently provides Jones with the necessary tools for detecting instances of oppression. She writes (Jones, 2000:4):

> In this book, I look at what feminist theorists have discovered about the rules of their various academic disciplines … an important point about the scope of feminist theory's project: this theory reaches into not only the academy but also the most personal dimensions of everyday living.

Characteristic of a feminist "commitment to participating in the struggle against the oppression of women and for their liberation" (Jones, 2000:5) is the awareness toward cultural aesthetics, normative criteria and what Jones calls a pragmatic eschatological orientation (2000:10). The characteristics of feminist theory provide a platform by which doctrine, institutions and practice may be analysed.

Firstly, cultural aesthetics concerns how women's natures are constructed by social institutions and the implication it has for gender constructs. There are two approaches to the debate; the essentialist: "Defined most broadly, essentialism/universalism, refers to any view of women's nature that makes universal claims about women based on characteristics considered to be an inherent part of being female" (Jones, 2000:26). These essential properties were thought to be immune from historical force (Jones, 2000:24) giving women an unchanging core (Jones, 2000: 27). Such debates are often seen within "the sex-gender scheme" (Jones, 2000:27).

Constructivism, on the other hand, has "a profound appreciation for the constitutive role of nurture or socialisation in the construction of 'women'" (Jones, 2000:32). It consequently focuses "on the social, cultural, and linguistic sources of our views of women and women's nature" (Jones, 2000:32), which

serves not as "ideas", "but the very institutional materiality within which (we) live" (Jones, 2000:34). In this way, the nature of a woman can be seen as multi-layered as a result of the various sources that shape her being.

Critique has been levelled at both essentialism and constructivism by feminists with a third proponent coming to the fore. Strategic essentialism, an alternative, represents an "in-between position" that "applauds constructivist critique of gender but feels nervous about giving up universals (or essences) altogether" (Jones, 2000:44). Unlike essentialism, strategic essentialism "stays open to critique and hence continually revises its "universals" (Jones, 2000:46).

Jones states this differently in her article "Sin, creativity, and the Christian Life" (2004a:260):

> All this is to say that, in our experience, many of what Christians have named as natural features of our gendered differences (as men and women) simply are not natural: rather, they are stories we have dreamed up- often in our churches- and called them natural … In this regard, gender is itself an artefact of the human process of creative production. Our gender myths are tales crafted by our cultural minds and passed down through the generations by the habits of our cultural bodies. As feminist theologians, we are actively engaged in an on-going process of re-crafting these "stories" about gender …

In an article on womanist visions and the future of theology, Serene Jones utilises the aesthetics of culture as paradigm for womanist readings described as "the aesthetics of racialized constructions" as "the terms by which it [race] is shaped in the world of our imagination" (2004:191) is significant. As will be seen later, Jones understands the imagination as the place where happiness and flourishing reside, for it is here that doctrine and practices either promote flourishing or negate it. If, then, the imagination is filled with norms which are not suitable, flourishing is negated. Jones elaborates on this notion by referring to doctrine as evoking particular "habits of thought" (2002:56). These habits of thought translate into forms of "knowing", which leads to "experiencing the joy of life abundant in God" (Jones, 2002:56).

Secondly, as strategic essentialism seeks to show, "feminist theory tries to hold its analysis of women's oppression in tension with an appreciation for both the flourishing of women and the complex "givenness" of their multiple circumstances" (Jones, 2000:6). Oppression cannot be analysed, however, if it is not given normative criteria[9] (Jones, 2000:7). It consequently provides a framework by which the negation of flourishing may be named. For Jones, feminist theory cannot be utilised apart from theological norms. John Calvin serves as apt example: "Correlatively, his deep belief in and facility for articulating a normative theological vision enabled him to engage in battles of cultural contestation that far surpassed those imagined…" (2001a:161). The model of doctrine that held together cultural critique and normative theological intervention was that of justification and sanctification (Jones, 2001a:162).

Cultural aesthetics and normative criteria go hand in hand, as the former contextualises the latter and the latter conceptualises the former (Jones, 2001a:163).

Thirdly, when speaking of the final component, "a predilection for the future" (Jones, 2000:8), Jones starts to integrate theology and theory: "Feminism has always been sustained by the belief that things can get better. This hope is reflected in the theory that comes out of the movement" (2000:9). The images of the future depicted need clarification yet are open enough to invite further interpretation

[9] Normative criteria like cultural aesthetics and a pragmatic eschatological orientation, is a key moment in the analysis of the doctrine of justification and sanctification within Jones' work (2001b:51). It is this normative reflection on Scripture that produces new means of appropriation of the text.

(Jones, 2000:10): "In this sense, the future that feminist theorists imagine is one that has already left its mark… It is a future that is both "already" and "not yet" present in history … I refer to this predilection for the future as feminist theory's pragmatic eschatological orientation[10] (Jones, 2000:10). A special place is thus given "to women's wisdom and the faithful visions of the future embedded therein" (Jones, 2004a:260).

As Jones moves back and forth between feminist theory and Christian theology, it becomes increasingly difficult to distinguish the already-not yet identity apart from Christian theology. Every moment of re-imagining is centred in grace. The act of flourishing is the driving force behind Serene Jones' particular remapping of Christian theology into feminist theology. While she never explicitly states what the exact "meaning" of flourishing[11] may be, Jones uses words such as "the abundant life" and "fullness" interchangeably. This understanding of the abundant life is "informed by doctrines of the Reformation tradition" (Jones, 2000:11). Flourishing is often described by its opposites, such as oppression for example. Serene Jones asserts (Jones, 2004a:260):

> In this regard, we both have a distinctly theological (and Reformed) understanding of the task and nature of feminism. In our minds, to be feminists means that, emboldened by our faith in God, we are actively seeking to build a world where all people, women and men alike, flourish, where God's creation is nurtured, and where God's will for justice, beauty, and mercy prevails. We ask what things presently (and in the past) hinder the flourishing of women: in this context, we are committed to looking at the causes of women's oppression.

Serene Jones locates reflection on flourishing in the Trinity and its relation to humanity "at the heart of my theological reflections also lie the affirmations that in Jesus Christ, God reconciled the world to Godself and redeemed humanity from sin and that this triune God calls us to abundant life in community and promises to dwell with us here and now and in the world to come" (Jones, 2000:11). The triune God, Jones suggests, is a normative framework "through which to make judgments about the character of human flourishing" (2008a:329).

A normative framework provides the forum wherein particular habits of thought are established and re-evaluated. Reformed "habit of thought" prove to be "deeply engaged, self-involving, and a form of trusting knowledge- the knowledge of faith" (Jones, 2000:56) and must therefore be revisited at every instance of re-imagining. "As such, it is a story that not only reaches back through time but also stretches forward into the present and through it to a future for which we wait with hopeful expectation" (Jones, 2000:56). The "Word event" becomes a moment where humans "might know the depth of God's love for them and, in knowing, experience the joy of life abundant in God" (Jones, 2000:56). The life abundant grows forth from knowing through doctrine.

Serene Jones described doctrine as embodied and embodying. "The plays of mind and imagination that comprise the landscape of doctrinal meanings are the same plays of mind and imagination that construct and engage everyday life in all its complex fullness" (Jones, 2008b:202). This means that life and doctrine are inseparable (Jones, 2008b:202). In the first instance, doctrine functions from the lived realities of its readers and in the second, Scripture exerts formative pressure on the experiences

[10] This eschatological orientation is emancipatory by nature (2001b:51).

[11] Grace Jantzen makes the case for flourishing as it is gender inclusive and favours the human condition (Jantzen, G. in Brummer & Sarot, 2006:11). Here, flourishing does not substitute talk of salvation but supplements it. Moreover, it does not describe the human condition as calamitous and in need of an *external* saviour who operates outside of the lived realities of humans. Instead, God is seen as intricately involved in the world and exists as source of life and meaningful existence (Jantzen in Brummer & Sarot, 2006:11).

of the individual and communal (Jones, 2007:74). Jones likens doctrine to the map of truth that anchors all her other stories (2007:75). Out of these stories, God comes to the readers and assures them of God's steadfastness (Jones, 2007:76). "Its authority is embedded in the "stuff" that my mind and body use to make sense of this all-pervading, ever-alive, graced assurance" (Jones, 2007:76).

The authority of doctrine is not only anchored in God's active presence, but also in its transformative power. As a fluid construct, doctrine presents the particular imaginings with a new reality (Jones, 2007:75), one free of oppression and negative social institutions. Jones calls this the rules of doctrine (2008b:199):

> When I open this world of doctrine to students, I try to show them what that imaginative world consists of by teaching them habituated thought-patterns that Christians have devised over the centuries to structure the deep faith plays of mind that comprise the terms of their engagement with the world.

Doctrines however, have not always favoured the female disposition in its lack of mediation of gender relations that structure the lives of women (Jones, 2000:17). For this very reason feminist theology "asks whether the church practices what it confesses and it requires that doctrinal dramas be tested in the concrete lives of women" (Jones, 2000:18). Feminist theory associates the negation of flourishing[12] with oppression. Jones expands the theme of oppression by discussing the doctrine of sin.

Oppression "refers to dynamic forces, both personal and social, that diminish or deny the flourishing of women" (Jones, 2000:71). There are multiple forms and these forms are ever changing. Iris Young calls these various oppressions "the five faces of oppression" (Young in Jones, 2000:80). They are as follows:

Oppression as exploitation, "this form of oppression describes a specific dynamic related to the distribution of labour and money" (Jones, 2000:80), additionally according to material feminists, it occurs in a sphere not normally considered, the home (Jones, 2000:81). The home is traditionally seen as the place where women are to work. Often the public and private spheres are categorised according to "traditional" familial roles. The result is the double exploitation of women, who work in both spheres, but are only given acknowledgement in the public sphere. Jones argues (2008:81):

> We also find in the "non-wage-earning sphere" the labour of slaves, children, and indentured servants, who worked both inside and outside the domestic sphere. Because the domestic sphere was associated with "women's work" and could be under- or uncompensated, capitalism profited from this labour, which was necessary to keep the economic machinery humming, but did not have to remunerate the labourers.

The gender training implicit in this duality is apparent; women are taught through social structures to want remuneration in the form of security, status and financial stability (Jones, 2000:83). "Again, the gender training women and men receive from their earliest years prepares them for such an exchange …" (Jones, 2000:83).

Oppression as marginalisation; "in Marxist theory, marginal persons constitute the permanent underclass of the unemployed, those who in advanced capitalist societies depend on state subsidies to survive" (Jones, 2000:84). Implicit in this understanding is the notion that dependence and

[12] Noteworthy is the fluid nature of "flourishing"; "Articulating this vision is challenging because it is always in a state of flux. Women's flourishing means something different to my Tuesday-night group than it meant to the first women's group that gathered in the church in 1772" (Jones, 2000:75).

productivity as "a basic human condition" is unsatisfactory (Jones, 2000:85). Feminist theorists understand productivity and dependence to be inevitable. Serene Jones confirms that (2000: 85):

> For persons to survive and flourish, social interactions and interdependency are inevitable: the modern myth of the self-sufficient individual is illusory in that it implies that one can exist in social isolation and carry out one's life plans without help from anyone. Concretely, this form of oppression is then seen in unemployment based on race, class or gender.

Oppression as powerlessness pertains essentially to "how decisions are made" and "power is distributed"[13] (Jones, 2000:86), evoking a sense of being infantilised, patronised, invisible and disrespected (Jones 2000:86). Within the corporate arena, organisations follow a gendered logic, whereby those being managed (whether male or female) are "imagined as feminine (passive, obedient, less rational, and dependent)" (Jones, 2000:86) and are subordinate to people who are deemed more "qualified" often imagined as "masculine (assertive, rational, and independent)" (Jones, 2000:86). In this logic, the former is found "performing in ways that the more powerful find acceptable" (Jones, 2000:86). "The(se) unspoken assumptions" consequently "prevent" women "from moving up in organisations where masculine leadership qualities are valued" (Jones, 2000:87).

Cultural Imperialism is best illustrated in the account told by Jones of one of the woman in her Tuesday-night gathering (2000:87):

> At Christmas, our Tuesday-night gatherings are often more tension filled than they are joyful. This is especially true for the woman in our group from Jamaica … Last year, this experience of being out of place was exacerbated by her failed attempts to find a new job with the temporary agency where she works - a failure related to her being a middle-aged, large-sized, African Caribbean woman with her strong Jamaican accent and a quiet demeanour. Nothing about her values, her appearance, her voice, or her sense of humour fit the unstated cultural standards of the employers she met.

Consequently, cultural imperialism "has to do with the way groups develop and apply cultural standards for defining, interpreting, and regulating beliefs, actions, and attitudes" as "universals" upon others (Jones, 2000:87,88). Character traits of an individual that challenge these norms are then seen as "deviant", "aggressive" and "unruly" (Jones, 2000:88). "This universal imposition of a distinctly masculine-socialized model devalues and silences cultural difference, the difference of women as relationally orientated decision makers" (Jones, 2000:89).

Oppression as violence is any act of "harassment, intimidation, or ridicule simply for the purpose of degrading, humiliating, or stigmatizing group members" (Young in Jones, 2000:89). Violence has become a social practice where women experience "specifically gendered forms of violence as a systemic and structural component of women's oppression and not merely the product of the pathologically maladjusted behaviour of small numbers of individual men" (Jones, 2000:89).

Violence as social practice implies that a "social climate"[14] is created where "violence is not only imaginable but tolerated or accepted as "natural"" (Rose in Jones, 2000:90). Identity is consequently

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[13] Here, Jones remarks on the work of Kathy Ferguson "(she) has mapped this dynamic of powerlessness in decision-making processes by looking at how the culture uses terms like "professional" and "nonprofessional" to describe the work people do" (2000:86). Jones instructs, "See Kathy, E. Ferguson, *The Feminist Case Against Bureaucracy* (Philadelphia: Temple Univ. Press, 1984), 84. See especially "Femininity as Subordination," 92-98: and "The Manager as Subordinate," 99-110."" (2000:190).

[14] Rose is cited by Serene Jones as, "Jacqueline Rose, "Introduction II," in *Feminine Sexuality: Jacques Lacan and the École Freudienne* (New York: Norton, 1982), 27-57." (2000:191).

won through the negation of another's (Jones, 2000:90). Furthermore, violence becomes a tool whereby everything that embodies a culture's fears is "sacrificed"[15] (Girard in Jones, 2000:91). By opening up the scope of that which constitutes violence, all physical and emotional harms may be called out for what they are.

Serene Jones engages with Iris Young's theory of oppression to illustrate how the agency of women is negated when they are assigned gendered roles. A position of critique toward an oppressive logic is the first step Jones takes to set forth a theological account of women's nature. In her affirmation of the Reformed tradition, Jones turns to the doctrine of justification and sanctification to re-establish an account of women's agency.

By introducing feminist theory and Christian theology as companionable wisdoms, Jones shows how feminist theory contributes to theology by critiquing unchecked gendered constructions. In return, Serene Jones argues that theology contributes to feminist theory by providing a normative vision established in the redemptive narrative. The doctrine of justification and sanctification are reformulated by Serene Jones in terms of feminist theology where the agency of women are understood as "graced agency."

2.3 Rediscovering the agency of women

The choice is made by Serene Jones to move beyond the moment of critique of feminist theory to the reading of doctrine and Scripture with the emphasis on grace. In her opinion, grace is the forum where women's agency find expression. The doctrines of justification and sanctification are consequently critiqued and re-interpreted in light of Jones' priority toward grace (2000:55):

> I have chosen the landscape of these two doctrines as the terrain to be remapped by the feminist discussion of women's nature because these doctrines also discuss human nature, albeit from the distinct perspective of our 'graced (redeemed) nature' in Christ. Feminist theology offers a re-appropriation of these doctrines in order to understand what it means to be a woman of faith … in a world where many different constructs compete to define her …

Two questions are presented to a woman of faith reading the doctrine of redemption, both pertaining to the "shaping" potential of justification and sanctification on their "identity" (Jones, 2000:55). Serene Jones explains that (2000:55):

> In the language of doctrine, this means asking, how might the doctrine of justification and sanctification craft the faith character of the woman who inhabits it? In the parlance of theory, this means exploring how a strategic essentialist like Iragaray might describe the principal contours of the feminist subject.

For Serene Jones, it is the "conversational play" between theory and theology that allows for a remapping (2000:55). Of importance for this study is the manner in which Jones uses this conversational play to engage theologically with the notion of flourishing as happiness and flourishing, a depiction of lived grace (2000:55).

The process of God "coming alive to persons as the creator and redeemer of their lives" "is grounded in God's merciful re-establishing of the divine human relationship destroyed by human sin" (Jones, 2000:56). This process of transformation is understood in terms of justification and sanctification. Justification is described by Luther as a dual process where human are *simul iustus et peccator*, an

[15] Here Jones makes use of the work by René Girard a cultural anthropologist. "See René Girard's discussion of imitation, "The Victimage Mechanism as the Basis of Religion," chap 1. in *Things Hidden since the Foundation of the World* (Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press, 1987)." (Jones, 2000:202).

identity marked by both judgment and love (Jones, 2000:57). Hereafter, the Holy Spirit empowers believers to be in service to their neighbour and faithful obedience to God (Jones, 2000:57). An "internal transformational" process "initiated fully by God" (Jones, 2000:57). "Standing in the space of sanctification, the one whose identity has been "undone" and "forgiven" is now given normative contours, disciplines, laws, and ethical directives within which to become a concretely new person in Christ" (Jones, 2000:58).

The traditional juridical setting and sanctified believer metaphors proposed in the previous paragraphs are problematic for feminist theorists however (Jones, 2000:59). When referring back to the discussion on women's nature, strategic essentialism asks, "How "women" are defined in the play of these two dramatic dynamics?" (Jones, 2000:59). Strategic essentialism subverts "the sex-gendered subject by dissolving its seemingly natural moorings and exposing the dangerous politics hidden in it" (Jones, 2000:59). Universals created from these normative frameworks are problematised as the nature of women are a "site where multiple axes intersect" (Jones, 2000:59), causing any standardisation of women's nature to be unfruitful (Jones, 2000:59). At the same time, strategic essentialists "also talk about the value of asserting an emancipatory vision of a just and caring society" (Jones, 2000:60). The nature of a woman is described by Jones (2000:61):

> She is the woman whose identity feels the pull of two dramatic forces: she is continuously undone and remade, disarticulated and redeployed: she is radically relational yet centred and directed.

Serene Jones asks accordingly, "How might the story of Christian conversion to new life in God look through the eyes of feminist theory?" (2000:61). Luther's juridical setting serves as one of Jones' examples. In this setting, "the pretensions of self-definition and pride are broken, and the arrogant defendant is positioned before God as deservedly "fragmented" and "lost" (Jones, 2000:62).

A problem is encountered, "feminist theory asks: What happens to the woman who enters this tale having spent her life … in the space of fragmentation and dissolution?" (Jones, 2000:62). Jones indicates the misplaced nature of Luther's appropriation of grace. "Women have a radically different 'illness'" (Jones, 2000:6) than men, she describes (Jones, 2000, 62):

> Her sin is not one of overly rigid self-containment: her brokenness lies in her lack of containment, in her cultural definition in relation to others. Instead of an overabundance of self, the source of her alienation from God is her lack of self-definition: she is too liquid, she lacks skin to hold her together, to embrace and envelop her.

At risk of not being able to relate to the saving power of God, "she is therefore without a story to initiate her into grace" (Jones, 2000:63) with the result that the God she meets is a recapitulated power relation unravelling her substance (Jones, 2000:63).

Serene Jones indicates how such a reading is counterintuitive. She suggests the moment of "conversion" be narrated in "reverse" (Jones, 2000:63), "starting with sanctification and its rhetoric of building up instead of with justification and its initial language of undoing" (Jones, 2000:63). The reversal creates the opportunity for the "construction of the self" before "turning to the moment of dismantling and forgiveness" (Jones, 2000:63). In the construction of self a woman's nature becomes agentic and embodied, "she is, in short, given an envelope of grace to contain her" (Jones, 2000:64). Jones describes a woman clothed in grace as having "a skin of her own" with "God's best desires" for her flourishing. Here, a second feature comes to the fore; flourishing is an existential position wherein

grace captures the emancipatory vision of woman. Grace then, embodies flourishing, through its containment of God's love for women. "Graced" becomes her new identity (Jones, 2000:64).

Serene Jones asks "how might she live in such a gracious space? Her nature is now defined according to the grace-given virtues of the Christian life: faith, hope, and love" (2000:65). The power of this formulation lies in the shift from talk of "women's nature" to her "becoming"[16] (Jones, 2000:65). "In the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, we meet this gracious love face to face, as it were" (Jones, 2002:57). "In him, the entire history of God with us happens" (Jones, 2002:57).

Strategic essentialists require in addition to "the positive space," that women "are called to self-critique and (a) collective revisioning" (Jones, 2000:65). The doctrine of justification functions as apt rhetorical tool to "expose the role that sin plays in humanity's attempts to define and control the world by measures of our own making" (Jones, 2000:66)[17]. Freedom is evoked when woman may "perform" (Jones, 2000:67) "an identity that is not ours by right but is a gift" (2000:67). Serene Jones explains (2000:60):

> When one is sanctified, one performs and is performed by the script of divine love that comes to us in Jesus Christ, a script mediated to us ecclesially … This script … is not just something that Christians learn to enact. Rather, as the very context within which we become who we are, it is the script of our most fundamental selves. As such, when we perform and are performed by grace, our lives take on the form that we are.

Conversion becomes an act of forgiveness by God through "the imputation of an alien righteousness, a performative conversion in which we receive a new role…" (Jones, 2000:67). Women who were uncontained selves are now "relational and fluid" (Jones, 2000:67). A woman is "opened by God to relation in God and thereby opened by God to the world of her relations" (Jones, 2000:67). To the possible critique of constructivists "de-centred, fluid subject", Jones answers that women are partially de-centred(Jones, 2000:67), "for in the space opened by conversion, relation is not the product of a culture that relentlessly constructs but is the gift of the God whose grace opens all to interactive co-existence" (Jones, 2000:67). Justification and sanctification thus form "a space within which women's agentic identity is reconfirmed and created, ever anew" (Jones, 2000:67).

"The twofold character of grace" (Jones, 2002:57), justification and sanctification, provide woman with freedom and form. Within the community of faith, this takes on the form of excellence and freedom (Jones, 2002:69). Jones describes the "interrelated nature of justification and sanctification" (2002:69). Justification is seen as the "ground out of which sanctification grows." "When one recognises the power of God's justifying love, one cannot help but celebrate that reality by forming one's life in the image of the One who has so freely loved". "When one "puts on Christ" (when one is sanctified), one is adorned in freedom that Christ gives us (the reality of justification)" (Jones, 2002:69-70).

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[16]Serene Jones describes in this regard: "As I shall later illustrate, this containment is communal in character: its shaping force lies in the space of Calvin's mother church or, better from a feminist perspective, in the community of faith adorned in freedom" (2000:65).

[17]"Recall constructivism's two principal contributions to a theory of 'woman'. Its critical function- that of exposing the illusions of falsely inscribed gender 'truths' that have patterned women's lives for centuries … Its alternative view of personhood- persons as relational and fluid subjects- is captured by the doctrine's notion of imputed righteousness: the new identity one puts on in Christ. To rethink this dimension of the doctrine of justification from a feminist perspective, remember the constructivist notion that 'gender' … is best described as a 'performance' (Jones, 2000:66).

Serene Jones takes feminist theory and feminist theology to be conversation partners. Where feminist theory provides a "critical lens", feminist theology provides a platform where "conceptual tangles" (2001c:298) may be worked out through doctrine. This is only possible when the apparent binaries, such as justification and sanctification, are seen to function paradoxically and not parasitically (Jones, 2001c:303). Doctrine consequently has "two simultaneous images: one of dismantling critique and freeing judgment, the other of organic wholeness and envelopment" (Jones, 2001c:299). Furthermore, the tension between "exaggerated notions of responsibility and rather despairing notions of entrapment" (Jones, 2001c:301) seen in the themes of women's nature, oppression and identity, are set within the "imaginistic economies standing together as markers of a single self" (Jones, 2001c:301).

Serene Jones continues from the imaginistic economies to what she calls an "eschatological (normative) vision" (2001a:162). It is to this "eschatological (normative) vision" that she turns in her appropriation of the doctrine of grace for example. She does this by using biblical narratives, the metaphors of dramas or scripts (Jones, 2000:20) and the imagination (Jones, 2009:20). Jones indicates (2000:20):

> As I discussed earlier, doctrines can be understood as sets of performative directives that define the possibilities and boundaries of appropriate Christian identity and behaviour. Christians and Christian communities can be said to 'perform' these scripts when, in faith, they try to follow their rules and directives. Doing so involves some individual and collective improvisation. To enact a dramatic role, one has to make the script one's own while recognizing that one does not own it-the script has its own logic from which the actor improvises. In this process of improvisation, feminist theory suggests to us new performative possibilities. As it remaps traditional doctrinal terrain, it allows Christians to find new ways to live (enact) their knowledge of the reality of God's grace.

To stay true to Serene Jones' method of making feminist theory and Christian theology two sides of the same coin, she turns to the source of our brokenness, sin. She investigates the relation that oppression has to sin by moving beyond oppression as social phenomenon to the role of sin in "despoiling" humanity (Jones, 2000:106) later named, "grace-denied" (Jones, 2000:123). Serene Jones explains (2000:93):

> Perhaps the most significant constant is our belief…that the brokenness we experience is not right, that there must be another way for us to live, a way that enables the flourishing of women and of all people … When we move feminist theory into this new world of theology, our understanding of injustice deepens and our basic assumptions about women and the character of our brokenness are challenged.

For women, the doctrine of sin has been highly ambivalent as the character of their brokenness was traditionally seen inherent in their sexuality (Jones, 2000: 94). In this way, the concept of sin became oppressive in and of itself (Jones, 2000:94). Jones consequently introduces the doctrine of original sin with much caution and allows, in the case of her Tuesday night group, the experience of each woman to "map" their reading of sin: "It was thus important that our Lenten study honour the particular stories of our members … This meant allowing our experiences of oppression to guide us as we turned to the study of … original sin" (Jones, 2000:94).

It is noteworthy that Serene Jones employs a similar methodology to that of Calvin in his *Institutes* when considering Christian doctrine (1995:201).

> However, as Calvin begins the task of constructing Christian doctrines, these earlier sentiments undergo a subtle transformation. He continues to make judgments about the meaning of doctrine based on its social function and use, and he continues to respect the complexity of the ways by which doctrines must be accommodated to the capacities and contexts of their audiences.

Jones' approach to sin in light of the doctrine of justification and sanctification is a "traditional Reformed rendition", albeit with a different point of departure (2000:95). Whereas feminist theory traditionally situates original sin with creation and the *imago dei*, Serene Jones suggests that (2000:95-96),

> Approaching sin from the perspective of justification and sanctification means seeing sin from the eschatological perspective of the woman who knows herself as sanctified and justified in faith, both now and in the promise of things to come.

She turns to Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian religion* where Calvin makes the knowledge of sin a function of Christian faith (Jones, 2000:98). It "depends on a prior doctrine of grace" where knowledge of sin lies in knowledge of humanity apart from sin, a knowledge that is given in faith alone" (Jones, 2000:98). Jones accordingly makes four comments, (a) "Sin is identified as theological concept" where its meaning only truly functions if understood as the negation of "God's positive purposes for humanity" (Jones, 2000:98). (b) "Sin is a distinctly dogmatic concept" … "we can see the wretchedness of our situation only if God reveals it to us by opening our eyes in faith" (Jones, 2000:98). (c) "As a grace-dependent concept, sin can never be understood apart from simultaneous affirmation of the promised grace that contradicts it" (Jones, 2000:98). Finally (d), "sin-talk is a tool of faith's pedagogy (Jones, 2000:99) and must thus not be used "to constrain the conditions of their (women's) flourishing" (Jones, 2004a:263).

Calvin uses the image of bereavement to depict the "wretchedness" of humanity as unfaithfulness (Jones, 2000:107). Unfaithfulness is a position "bereft of the benefits of faith: it is to be without both the sanctifying structure of God's love and the ever renewing forgiveness of justification" (Jones, 2000:107). Serene Jones refers to two metaphors used by John Calvin; despoilment and a juridical setting. The former refers to "a loss of skin or, to use the language of sanctification, the loss of the enveloping grace that holds us together and gives our lives direction and purpose" (Jones, 2000:107), while the latter speaks of human agency which is "tempered" by "our servitude to the sin that binds us" and the responsibility to be taken for sin in light of God's righteousness (Jones, 2000:107).

To stay true to the feminist theological agenda, Serene Jones continues to do what Valerie Saiving Goldstein[18] argues for, "that Christians need to expand their imaginative categories for naming sin to include the experiences of women" (Goldstein in Jones, 2004a:262). The question becomes "What does sin look like when the sinner in question is socialised to be subservient rather than dominating?"[19] (Jones, 2004a:262). Asked differently, how does this doctrine "shape their becoming" (Jones, 2000:108). Jones investigates what content within the doctrine of sin warrants a reading of oppression as sin: "The short answer is that the two (feminist theory and feminist theology)[20] are viewing the world through different "lived imaginative constructs- different interpretive lenses" (2000:108).

Inherent in the lens of feminist theologians is that "God wills the flourishing of all people" (Jones, 2000:108). It is an eschatological moment breaking into the present, "women's oppression is no

[18] Serene Jones references Valerie Saiving Goldstein's contribution as "Valerie Saiving Goldstein, "The Human Situation: A Feminine View," *Journal of Religion* 40 (April 1960)" 100-112." (2004a:262).
[19] This statement is made in light of the classical Augustinian conception of sin as "excessive self-centredness and robust pride" (Jones, 2004a: 262).
[20] Jones refers here to the two different ways that feminist theorists and feminist theologians look at violence as either oppression or sin (2000:109).

longer simply a social phenomenon (as feminist theorists see it) but that which defies the will of God" (Jones, 2000:109). A world without oppression is constantly threatened by daily realities with the result that "the theological vision of flourishing easily slips away" (Jones, 2000:109). Using the example made earlier of the Caribbean woman, Jones proffers: "The Caribbean woman's imaginative power cannot stretch to see her without muscles tensed each day to repel racism. She can name her oppression, but to call it "sin" and tie it to a vision of God's redemption is a different matter" (2000:109).

As a result of the fact that sin blinds women to the true nature of their oppression, grace comes from outside their normative framework and provides "a vision that has the power to transform our knowledge of harms and injustices into knowledge of sin" (Jones, 2000:109). Redemption becomes an alternative reality, where the effects wrought by sin "does not linger long: in faith, she affirms the reality of redemption, the future of women's flourishing" (Jones, 2000:110). In effect, hope serves as foundation for the eschatological orientation towards flourishing.

The unique contribution of feminist theology exists in the reading of sin from an economy of grace (Jones, 2000:124). "This perspective permits feminist theologians to have a broader understanding of oppression than do feminist theorists. It allows them to be both less and more optimistic about the brokenness of our world, particularly with respect to women" (Jones, 2000:124). "Feminist conceptions of sin also provide hope for women's liberation against what often seem daunting odds. In faith, grace accompanies us in the struggle, and we know that the victory has already been won and is assured in the future" (Jones, 2000:124). Grace consequently, "continues to define God's undaunted love for humanity …" (Jones, 2000:125).

Serene Jones illustrates a discomfort with the sin-grace model employed in the doctrine of sanctification and justification in her reading of sin. She further problematises the sin-grace dichotomy in light of oppression and violence toward women by suggesting that it breeds "an almost instinctual optimism about change that is hard to sustain" (Jones, 2009: 155).

Serene Jones has indicated how doctrine and Scripture shape the identity of women through their identification with the redemptive narrative. Due to the shaping potential, gender insensitive readings need to be critically engaged with. Jones does this by establishing grace, instead of sin, as forum where women's agency finds their expression. The result is a reading of the doctrine of justification and sanctification where the emphasis is placed on grace which gives to women a new role in the redemptive narrative. Grace may consequently be understood to affirm the agency of women which enables their happiness and flourishing.

2.4 Grace enabled flourishing

In the last chapter of *Trauma and Grace,* Serene Jones shows a discomfort with "the fundamental dramatic structure of the sin-grace model" which remains unquestioned (2009:155). Jones holds that "whether it was liberation theology, feminist theology, or substitutionary atonement theology (all of which rely on a version of the basic story line), the story bred an almost instinctual optimism about change that is hard to sustain" (Jones, 2009:155). "At the crudest level, it trains one to assume that if one works hard enough at healing, one will obtain what one asks for" (Jones, 2009:155). The "harsh fact" is "that the vast majority of trauma survivors reach the end of their lives still caught in its terrifying grip" (Jones, 2009:155). Serene Jones questions "how do we come to grips with the fact that a mind disordered and diseased by violence might well be one in which the very "imagining" mechanism necessary for redemption has been broken … beyond repair" (2009:155).

Serene Jones engages in a search for a "trauma-wizened version of the sin-grace story" (2009:157). The moment of simultaneous embrace, where the crucifixion narrative enables an individual to behold Christ while also being beheld, is significant for the process of discovering a new way of understanding grace. "What matters is the physical sensation of simultaneously loosing yourself (to pain, to fear, or to just the strangeness of the motion) and being safely held while it happens. According to trauma theory, this off-kilter embrace enacts the therapeutic insight: by testifying and bearing witness, you intuitively learn to bear up under the weight of the trauma you are speaking" (Jones, 2009:160). "Theologically, this strange embrace physically performs the promise that through grace, we are found, forgiven, and fortified by God" (Jones, 2009:160).

The "strange embrace" becomes the premise of a "trauma-wizened" grace argues Jones (Jones, 2009: 160):

> Unlike the vanquishing of sin in the old story of sin-grace, this double motion of loss and support physically enacts the reality of being a sinner and a saint, not in succession but both at the same time. Fully, we are undone and yet also held together in the strong grip of divine compassion.

An unexpected moment comes in the process of being "thrown open" when ones is "viscerally extended toward your surroundings" (Jones, 2009:160). "Theologically cast, the moment enacts the embodied grace feeling of accepting your life as a gift and a promise, and living in the expansive sense of time and space that this gift provides" (Jones, 2009:161).

Grace evokes "two habits of spirit" (Jones, 2009:161), which Jones calls "mourning and wonder" (2009:161). Serene Jones admits (2009:161, 165):

> Neither one answers the question that trauma poses to grace. They are, instead, states of mind that, if nurtured, open us to the experience of God's coming into torn flesh, and to love's arrival amid violent ruptures… At the edge of every thought, there resides the promise of both ever-deepening loss and insistently imposed newness … there is a space that both carries traumatic loss and yet remains open and new. This is a profoundly presentist vision of life, landing us hard in the here and now: to be saved is not to be taken elsewhere" neither is it "driven toward evolving resolution. It is to be awakened- to mourn and to wonder. And to stand courageously on the promise that grace is sturdy enough to hold it all.

Jones follows a similar logic when approaching the church as graced community. She starts her chapter on community by looking at the various critiques feminist theory has levelled at the church as social institution, after which she offers a new perspective.

In a discussion held with Serene Jones' Tuesday-night group on the distinctiveness of the church as community, eight features came to the fore. (1) The church as community where "Scripture is recounted and listened to", (2) within Scripture "the theme of community is sounded repeatedly," (3) "the story (of Scripture) is recounted in many different ways," (4) "people have a rather peculiar relationship to this story." (5) "Church as the community that imitates and performs[21] us," (6) "people describe themselves as "called[22]" into this community by God," (7) church as community takes precedence over other communities, but "the church never constructs our world in isolation from our other communal commitments: it normatively shapes us in the midst of them" (Jones, 2000:156-158).

[21]"The image of performance clarifies the way the church inhabits Scripture. It captures even better than imitation the theatrical dimensions of the church's life in the narrative" (Jones, 2000:157).
[22] In the act of being called, "divine initiative" is displayed. "The church thus experiences its existence as a gift" (Jones, 2000:158).

The final characteristic of the church has to do with the often "unquestioned authority" it has been given in the past, "We knew from history that the church's view of itself as chosen had justified horrendous acts of injustice against women and many other as well" (Jones, 2000:158). The final characteristic was thus the churches "identity as a sinful community" (Jones, 2000:159). The church consequently becomes a place where "those who *have* faith" (Jones, 2000:159) come together. Jones emphasises the "fallenness" (2000:159) of the church in "creating the golden calf" and "oppressing the poor" (Jones, 2000:159). For such instances, the "language of performance" is used by Jones; "the church simultaneously performs the roles of the righteous and the unrighteous - of both saints and sinners" (2000:159). The church is therefore "engaged in a continual process of internal critique-a process of continued reformation-lest its faith pronouncements and practices become destructive idols of its own creation" (Jones, 2000:159).

The reason for seeing the church as graced community is motivated by Serene Jones in the statement: "While I am aware of the church's ongoing sinfulness, I experience it as a place where I can respond to the Christian and feminist call to live in and struggle with communities of diversity seeking justice" (2000:161). She continues to describe the church as one place where one can "live in intentional and diverse communities" (Jones, 2000:161).

The notion of *simul iustus et peccator* is applied to the church where "a collective people" "is similarly undone by divine judgment and remade by divine grace" (Jones, 2000:162). According to its status as simultaneously justified and sinner, the church as community is placed in the "defendant" seat (Jones, 2000:162). Jones continues (2000: 163):

> Standing under the judgment of the law, this church is not only condemned because of its false institutional pride and its arrogant functionalist pretensions: it is so levelled by the law that it can finally claim no special standing, in its own rite, before God.

As such, the church "is fully implicated in the sins of the world" (Jones, 2000:163) it too stands "undone" before God (Jones, 2000:163) with no means of justifying itself from within itself. The church is only deemed "forgiven" when God pronounces the church "justified" through the reconciliation brought in Jesus Christ (Jones, 2000:163). "As such, it is a community whose identity comes to it from beyond itself. It receives the name "forgiven"" (Jones, 2000:163) and a "space is created where God's will for human flourishing might be embodied, in this space, people might know God and be formed by God's love" (Jones, 2000:170-171).

As result of the "alien righteousness" (Jones, 2000:56) being given to the church, it responds in thankfulness by proclaiming "God's reconciling the world to Godself in Jesus Christ" an act which is in itself a "performance" (Jones, 2000:163). A performance which recognises its "full implication in the sin the cross reveals" (Jones, 2000:163). With Luther's emphasis of the justified community of believers, Serene Jones turns to Calvin's doctrine of the church.

Calvin displays a different approach to the "institutional aspects of ecclesial life" than Luther, where Luther, "realizes that the earthly church inevitably takes institutional form, his basic disposition toward authority and institutions is largely negative" (Jones, 2000:165). "Calvin, in contrast, dwells on the institutional features of ecclesial existence: he delights in them, struggles with them, and in his own life tried to shape them" (Jones, 2000:165). Serene Jones attributes Calvin's "positive references to the church" (2000:165) in his vocation as teacher of ministry students (Jones, 2000:165). These ministry students were headed for "parishes in France", where they were "actively persecuted" and was intent on "fostering forms of community resilient enough to resist outside forces seeking to destroy them" (Jones, 2000:165). Accordingly, Jones believes the doctrine of sanctification to be "one

of the responses to the hardships faced by the community" (2000:165). "Calvin's doctrine of the church therefore focuses more on the processes by which a faith community is formed and maintained than on the monetary juridical decision central to Luther's account of community" (Jones, 2000:165).

The particular characteristic of grace as "envelope" (Jones, 2002c:60) has the similar function in a communal reading, "the church as a communal context in which people are pulled together and given defining practices and institutional form by a sanctifying grace" (Jones, 2000:165). This understanding of sanctification extends to two metaphors; the church as "God's accommodation" and the church as "Mother" (Jones, 2000:166). The church as God's accommodation is for Serene Jones "The external means or aims by which God invites us into the society of Christ and holds us therein" (2000:166), "the central drama of the sanctified life in its corporate dimensions" (Jones, 2000:166). Here, "God's grace welcomes us into it and then contains and embraces us once we arrive" (Jones, 2000:166).

The church as mother underscores the "forming power of Christian community" (Jones, 2000:167): "Just as a child is knit together in her mother's womb, the people of faith are conceived and brought to life in the corporate body of the church" (Jones, 2000:167). Two implicit images are noteworthy for Serene Jones, "the *material* and *embodied* ways in which the church forms us" (2000:167). "In the womb of the Christian community, we are pulled together and refashioned in a manner that contradicts the chaos of sin and gives us new patterns of living in Christ's life" (Jones, 2000:167).

The two "moments" (Jones, 2002:55) provide the graced community with "the convictional ground for understanding the importance of "the excellence of practices." Justification complements "this understanding of forming grace by stressing "the freedom of practices" (Jones, 2002:55). Serene Jones has illustrated in the doctrine of justification and sanctification how grace deconstructs the brokenness of humanity while creating a forum wherein the brokenness may be healed. The community of faith undergoes a similar process, termed "bounded openness" (Jones, 2000: 170). Serene Jones underscores the notion of "bounded openness" in her feminist ecclesiology. A feminist ecclesiology serves to continue the affirmation of agency in both the individual and the community of believers.

2.5 The graced agency of the church

In seeking to establish a feminist ecclesiology, Serene Jones focuses on the "eschatological vision that undergirds and drives it" (2000:170). The image of "bounded openness"[23] describes the process where "the church adopts certain rules and normative claims, while remaining open to God, others, and the world" (Jones, 2001b:49). This image "draws together" the two perspectives of Luther and Calvin, while remaining aware of "the tension between normative agendas" and a feminist suspicion of "false universals" (Jones, 2000:170). The image of bounded openness "sums up the debate" between liberalist and communitarian theories of community[24] (Jones, 2000:170):

[23] Here, Serene Jones alludes to a third path between liberal and communitarian theories, "a path that values the liberative potential of both normative rigor and historical openness." The notion of bounded openness is not without its tension: "Liberal social contract theory gives us boundedness in the form of its universal principles and its robust understanding of rights … As feminists point out, however, liberalism's universals are gender biased and its procedures may not facilitate the openness they seek." "Communitarianism gives us boundedness in its insistence on the thick cultural and institutional particularities of communal life ... As feminists argue, however, communities" boundedness can become an uncritical celebration of patriarchal values, and without a gender analysis, their openness may be more confining than liberating" (Jones, 2000:152).

[24] Liberalism: "The model of political community with which most people in North America are familiar,… Liberalism thus gives primacy to a theory of the self in its definition of ideal community … As one can see, liberal theory is driven by the desire to create a rationally ordered social environment in which persons with differing interests and aspirations can peacefully coexist (Jones, 2000:135-137).

> Ecclesial boundedness embraces both the boundedness of liberalism's universal principles and the boundedness of communitarianism's thick community formation. Ecclesial openness, affirms both the respect for difference crucial to liberalism and the irreducible particularity of tradition important to communitarianism.

In order to account for the unique contribution that an "eschatological ecclesiology" makes to feminist theology, Serene Jones finds the correlation of the church to community insufficient. "The language of "church" and "community" (in the liberal/communitarian debate) are so different one cannot simply correlate them. Instead, one must tell the ecclesial story in a new way, uncovering dramatic forces similar to those in the story of political community" (Jones, 2000:170).

The analogy of divine forgiveness and undoing comes to the fore again when seeking "to understand the church as gift of God" (Jones, 2000:170). Jones indicates that: "In each story, the economy of grace in the God-church relation is different, both, however, are necessary to apprehend the singular yet complex reality of ecclesial community" (2000:171). The "two economies of relation" are that of touch, where the "church is created by a grace that embraces and contains it" (Jones, 2000:171) and speech through the reading of Scripture. "God's word brings the church into existence as people hear the gospel news and believe" (Jones, 2000:171).

In one moment, states Serene Jones (2000:171):

> This word breaks in upon the church as a judgment that profoundly undoes it. Grace disarticulates the sins of the community, and God's judgment ruptures its boundaries, exposing the arrogance of its false adornments and undoing its many pretensions.

In the next moment, she (Jones, 2000:173) suggests:

> this graced word also redeploys the church as a constantly forgiven community of sinners: it permits the church to forever start again, knowing that God's love embraces it regardless of its feeble mistakes and gross misdeeds.

The two images of adornment and forgiveness allow Jones to relate to liberal/communitarian theories by looking at "the emancipatory practices associated with each" (2000:173). As "adorning church", the church focuses on "enclosure and formation" over and above "devolution and critique" (Jones, 2000:173). "In all these ways[25], this church gives great attention to the formation and nurture of faithful subjects who know themselves created and redeemed by God" (Jones, 2000:173). Forgiveness as openness goes beyond the formation of its own to seeking "practices that honour the bodies of all people."

The church becomes "an advocate for those in the broader culture as well as in its own midst" (Jones, 2000:173). "Recognizing the grace that envelops and defines the integrity of all creation, this church contests institutions and practices that fracture and diminish" and "it has a positive vision of the kind

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Communitarianism: "Communitarianism" refers to a wide range of perspectives in contemporary political theory … What these perspectives have in common-what makes them communitarian- is their rejection of liberalism's isolated individualism in favour of a more community-centred understanding of human life ... Rather than ground their reflections on ideal community in a rational account of the abstract, isolated, self-interested 'man of reason' and his actions in the public realm of politics, communitarians thus look to our neighbourhoods, our churches, our ethnic traditions, and our extended family networks to find a whole clutch of values and views of self that form our view of communality and our sense of a good society" (Jones, 2000:144-145).

[25] Serene Jones refers here to the various graced practices (2002*)* the church engages with to ensure its boundedness. "Many different practices fall under this rubric: practices of birthing, nurturing, comforting, and protecting" (Jones, 2000:173).

of space human beings need to flourish" (Jones, 2000:173). In the process of envisioning a space where human beings can flourish, practices are created "in which the freedom of the church allows it to reach beyond itself to serve the needs of others. These practices of outpouring mimic the gifted nature of God's forgiving grace" (Jones, 2000:173).

The sanctified and justified church work together in bounded openness: "The sanctified church is skilled in the crafts of creating community: it binds people together by establishing and enforcing shared rules and a common sense of identity. The justified church is forever transgressing those boundaries in order to greet what is different from it." They thus "require" one another (Jones, 2000:174).

The church described by Serene Jones is seen by her as a "preliminary aesthetic of community." "It provides two images of a single community that, when laid upon each other, create a portrait of communal life in which a substantive, walled structure opens itself both to the grace that posits it and the people it is called to serve" (Jones, 2000:175). The church "in traditional terms of theological ecclesiology," "is both a "sacramental embodiment" of grace and a "witness" to grace" (Jones, 2000:175).

The church as graced community has "the most basic claim undergirding the vision- the claim that ecclesial community is a gift from God" (Jones, 2000:176). This claim calls for "its materiality" to be "treasured" and "the freedom it affords celebrated" (Jones, 2000:176). The eschatological vision of the church as graced community resonates with feminist theory's "hopes of envisioning community as it should be" (Jones, 2000:176).

In the aforementioned paragraphs, Serene Jones brings liberal/communitarian theory into conversation with feminist theology. A process described by her as theory being "pulled into (or unwillingly dragged into) the strange universe of faith and unfolded from inside this perspective" (2001b:55). Theory simultaneously effects the workings of the boundedness of the church as it, "in turn, push(es) against the contours of this strange universe, shifting its infrastructure and pressing its boarders" (Jones, 2001b:55).

The dynamic interplay of conversation partners leads Serene Jones to reflect in her article "Bounded Openness"[26] (2001b) on Luce Irigaray's methodology. Irigaray's methodology is one where a self-critical posture might lead towards giving "up on the task of making normative, bold, and often unambiguous truth claims about the content of the Christian confession." Jones (like Irigaray) prefers that a "deconstructive moment" be "accompanied by the constructive (cataphatic) moment of normative assertion" (Irigaray in Jones, 2001b:56). She sees this as "a call for theology to rightly ground its normative assertions in the soil of its confessed story- the story of God with us in Jesus Christ- and its compelling beauty" (Jones, 2001b:57). Serene Jones describes this narrative as (2001b:58):

[26] In "Bounded Openness", Serene Jones engages with the theme of the church, postmodernism and feminism. She looks at each respective perspective with specific focus on the "deconstructive posture" of postmodernism. "This deconstructive posture forces us to be especially self-conscious about the grounds we use to justify a given theological position, particularly if those grounds are of an uncritical Enlightenment variety. As we engage in doctrinal reflection, the postmodernist asks us to remember that what often passes for universal, rational truth may well be more a product of culture than of a mythic "unencumbered reason" (Jones, 2001b:55-56). She goes on to argue: "However, I part ways with such positions when the desire to embrace this negative moment leads one finally to give up on the task of making normative, bold, and often unambiguous truth claims about the content of the Christian confession" (Jones, 2001b:56).

> The church is not a community of sinners … It is a community marked by a grace that constantly opens it outward in two directions. On the one hand, the church is called to look beyond itself to the God who calls it into being and to offer praise for the grace that holds it…On the other hand, the church knows that it has been called into being by God not simply for its own sake but for the purpose of serving the world…In both these ways, then, the church is a community of radical openness: openness to God, openness to the world.

The narrative of grace creates a conceptual arena wherein the "bounded openness" (Jones, 2001b:57) of the church may be practiced. The community of faith is given a normative framework for living as "graced individuals" whereby they are characterised by both adornment and freedom. Similar to the grace enabled flourishing of women, the church is enabled to flourish communally through grace that "embraces and contains it" (Jones, 2000:17). The church accordingly creates practices that attests to their grace enabled flourishing which are a healing performances.

2.6 Grace as an arena for healing performances

Serene Jones makes the transition from theory to practice in her description of doctrine as "lived imaginative landscapes" and "dramas". Doctrine extends beyond "propositional statements affirmed as true in faith, more broadly, these doctrines function as conceptual arenas within which Christian identity is shaped and the contours of Christian life are formed" (Jones, 2002:74).

"As lived imaginative landscapes, doctrines serve as conceptual territory within which Christians stand to get their conceptual bearings on the world and the reality of God therein" (Jones, 2002:74). "The term 'imaginative' functions to describe the role doctrines play in structuring the conceptual terrain of our thought and action" so that doctrines "demarcate the interpretive field through which we view the world and ourselves and are not merely 'truth claims' whose objective factuality demands our assent" (Jones, 2002:74). Doctrines as "dramatic scripts" which "Christians perform and are performed by" alludes to "the person-shaping character of doctrine" (Jones, 2002:75). In both of the above mentioned cases doctrine necessarily implicate practice (Jones, 2002:75), "Practices are not just things we do in light of doctrine: practices are what we become as we are set in motion in the space of doctrine" (Jones, 2002:75). Imaginative landscape and drama co-exist, affirming "the relationship that exists between the imaginative intention of the person or community engaging in a practice and the visible grammar of the practice itself" (Jones, 2002:75).

In her book, *Trauma and Grace* (2009), Serene Jones continues from doctrines as imaginative landscape and dramatic script to that which undoes this "conceptual terrain" (2009:13), trauma and violence. She broadly defines trauma as any act of violence (or oppression) "where one experiences the threat of annihilation" (Jones, 2009:13). This threat of annihilation has the potential of "disordering the imagination" (Jones, 2002: 119), the very platform from which doctrine functions (Jones, 2009:20). "A traumatic event reconfigures the imagination, affecting our ability to tell stories about ourselves and our world that are life giving and lead to our flourishing" (Jones, 2009:20).

Jones sees a "traumatized mind as a challenge of healing imagination" (2009:20). In the articles published from her book *Trauma and Grace*[27](2009), she "attempts to think through the implications" of traumatic "experiences" "for the healing work of theology and faith communities today" (Jones, 2009:21). "The Christian faith provides a manner of imagining that inspires a way of life shaped deeply by biblical stories, rituals, and traditions, and it has its own ways of ordering the imagination"

[27]"Emmaus Witnessing: Trauma and the Disordering of the Theological Imagination" (Jones, 2001d), "Sin, Creativity, and the Christian Life" (Jones & Rigby, 2004a) and "Hope Deferred: Theological Reflection on Reproductive Loss (Infertility, miscarriage, stillbirth)" (Jones, 2001e).

(Jones, 2009:21). In this way, Serene Jones tries to "explore how an imagination shaped by grace might meet and heal an imaginative world disordered by violence" (2009:21).

Jones describes the imaginative landscape shaped by a Christian identity (2009:21):

> A Christianly formed imagination thus tells stories about people who are agents in their own lives, with God-given grace to act, moving through concrete embodied history in time, coherently connected to their own pasts and the stories of others who came before them, related intimately to other people and to the good creation that sustains them, and looking forward in hope to a flourishing future.

In the article "Inhabiting Scripture, Dreaming Bible" (2007) Serene Jones describes Scripture as the means through which God continuously comes to us (2007:76). She describes how "Scripture and its many stories captivate our imaginations and brings us to new knowledge of God and ourselves" (Jones, 2000:167). Jones remembers that (2007:76):

> As I look back over it all[28], it strikes me that at each step along the way, the stories pulled me into their realm of imagination in radically different ways. What has remained constant, however, is this dynamic of the stories pulling me in, sometimes kicking and screaming, at other times without a struggle, and at still other times without my knowing it has happened.

Serene Jones calls this process of "Scriptural pull" the "inhabitation" of her imagination by Scripture (2007:78). From this "inhabited" space, she describes Scripture as nurturing in her "a profound and abiding feeling that existence is not only contingent on God's will but is unfolding in space that exists only and forever in God" (Jones, 2007:78). From the imaginative landscape of Scripture, Jones locates the "reordering of imagination" (2002:119) through the reframing of traumatic stories "in the context of the story of our faith"[29] (Jones, 2002:120). She continues to describe the various social institutions that will compete to reorder the collective imaginations of America, such as movies[30] and comedies. In effect, when the traumatic event is rehearsed over and over in the collective memory, these comedies or movies provide a different ending to the anticipated traumatic[31] event (Jones, 2002: 124).

In the context of collective disordering of the imagination, Serene Jones believes "the tale of the disciples meeting Jesus on the road to Emmaus" (Luke 24:13-43) with its "images" and "narrative" to "work better than the logic of systematics," "when trying to re-order the disordered thoughts of a people in crisis" (2002:125). She believes the disciples to be trauma survivors, evidenced "in their speech and their bodies the reality of the horror that unfolded before them and forever pulled their lies into its drama" (Jones, 2002:126). Three "moments" occur in the process of orientation, where Jesus "comes to them:" firstly, "Jesus walks up and joins them," symbolising the "coming of God into a

[28] Here, Serene Jones refers to experiences that had formed her from the age of thirteen, such as baptism, the birth of her daughter and when she had cancer. At each moment different scriptural stories came alive "in ways hitherto unimaginable" (2007:76).

[29] Jones locates the process of reframing in the church as a community of faith because the event of 9/11 caused *collective* trauma to occur (2007:119). As such, it is necessary that the church engage *collectively* in a re-imaginative process.

[30] Serene Jones refers here to the presence of "vengeful patriotism, exclusionary compassion and escapist comedies" (2002:124).

[31] Jones describes trauma as causing a "memory breach" in an individual who experiences trauma, as the imagination calls to remembrance the events continuously without the experiences associated with the trauma ceasing. Thus, every time the imagination remembers the traumatic event, the body responds as though it is experiencing the trauma anew. "To suffer from a traumatic stress disorder is to live in a mental world where the usual landmarks of meaning have fallen down and the most familiar path to reordering this disordered world is to repeat the event" (Jones, 2007:119).

place of disordered violence," secondly, "Jesus breaks the pattern of their storytelling,[32]" finally, "through a bodily gesture that is deeply embracing," "an event of life-giving communion," "the repetitive cycle is broken, and their imaginations are reframed around a shared table" (Jones, 2002:126-127).

Instead of returning to a "state of previous innocence", the disciples wrestle with the traumatic event whilst witnessing of Christ (Jones, 2002:127), the disciples "want to believe in a world where Jesus lives, where hope stands strong, but they cannot seem to get there. They say all the right words, but the truth remains elusive…Belief and horror stand together" (Jones, 2002:127). It is this disposition that marks the church that has collective disordered imaginations. "According to Lawrence Langer[33], after trauma, we never return to a state of previous innocence. The survivor does not travel a road from the normal to the bizarre back to the normal again … but from the normal to the bizarre back to a normalcy so permeated by the bizarre encounter with atrocity that it can never be purified again. The two worlds haunt each other" (Langer in Jones, 2002:127).

The process of the reimagining and reordering of the imagination occurs in a new reality exemplified in the wounds of Christ[34], "the way forward will be into the heart of the wounds, by being receptive to grace that continually vanishes and returns" (Jones, 2009:41). Finally, "His words 'Peace be with you,' gives us a vision of what we are called to create among ourselves now and in the days to come" (Jones, 2009:42).

In a more pastorally orientated context, Serene Jones reads the doctrine of grace through the lens of violence. She does so by turning to "Calvin's most famous biblical commentary, a reading of Psalms"[35] (2009:43) where "we meet a theologian who is not afraid to jump into the messiness of everyday life and explain how this poetry might help one negotiate difficult issues and challenges" (2009:45). Calvin's commentary on the Psalms parallels Jones' reading of Scripture as imaginative landscape; Calvin "called the Bible "a lens we put on" and through which we look at the world," "he also used theatrical images to describe our relation to Scripture" (2009:46). In fact, Scripture is a "script of our existence" (Jones, 2009:46). Another parallel lies in Calvin's view of violence[36] (as extending beyond the physical to the emotional): "He is similarly aware that their suffering is ongoing (not just a past event), that it is collective (not just individual and personal), and that it involves their social isolation and marginalization" (Jones, 2009:49).

In the final instance, similar to Luke 24:13-43, Calvin "using his theological and rhetorical genius, interpreted the Psalms in a manner that invited his suffering readers into plays of mind and vistas of

[32]"Remarkably, he begins to reconstruct their account of his death and continued life, and he does so by first interpreting for them the tale of "Moses and the prophets." He reorders the disciples' imagination by piling it into the history of God's relation with Israel" (Jones, 2002:126).

[33] Serene Jones references the work of Lawrence Langer as "Lawrence Langer, *Versions of Survival: The Holocaust and the Human Spirit* (Albany: State University of New York Press), 1982, 88 in *Emmaus Witnessing*" (2002:127).

[34] Serene Jones writes in her article "Glorious Creation, Beautiful Law" regarding Calvin's understanding of the relation of Christ to the law: "Christ fully enacts it (the Law) by becoming, in our midst, both a complete and full sacrifice and a perfect model of regenerate existence. In this existence Christ performs in the purest and clearest form possible the double grace that inspires and constitutes the law" (2006:37).

[35]"Calvin called the book an "anatomy of all parts of the soul," thereby meaning it was a map of a human soul, divided, torn, haunted, rageful, terrorized, and yet amazingly made ever hopeful through the enduring presence of grace awakened in prayer" (Jones, 2009:43).

[36] Here, Jones offers a brief autobiographical section on the life of Calvin and his history of coming from a context of persecution. In her opinion, Calvin likens himself to David, in that David was persecuted and had a pastoral heart towards "the folks of old to whom the Psalms were written, they embodied the anatomy of a tortured soul" (Jones, 2009:48).

faithful imagination that he believed would offer them hope and healing" (Jones, 2009:49). By inviting readers into the plays of mind present in the Psalms, Calvin (Jones, 2009:52):

> enters into the depths of their traumatic anguish: instead of explaining why they are suffering. He lays before them collective patterns of thinking, acting, and feeling that he believes has the power to soothe their mental distress even as they continue to experience the ravaging force of traumatic events.

Prayer is described as a "healing performance" where "we testify" and "God witnesses" (Jones, 2009:52). "Calvin's commentary is devoted to showing his readers how this transformation of imagination happens when we lift up our groaning to the Divine" (Jones, 2009:53). In prayer an arena is created that (a) establishes safety (Herman[37] in Jones, 2009:52), (b) remembers and mourns (Herman in Jones, 2009:52) and (c) reconnects an individual with the ordinary life (Herman in Jones, 2009:52). Serene Jones explains (2002:53, 54):

> There needs to be an ongoing, dynamic conversation taking place between a testifier and a witness. In testifying the survivor gives voice to previously unspoken agony, and in witnessing, the receiver of the testimony is able to confirm that the survivor's voice is heard and that the plight no longer needs to be hidden in a dark corner of the soul, but can be pulled into the light of day and affirmed as a reality worthy of sustained lamentation and possible redress.

Two of Serene Jones' articles, "Sin, Creativity, and the Christian Life" (2004a) and "Hope Deferred: Theological Reflections on Reproductive Loss" (2001e) examine "the working of grace in the lives of individuals who have suffered from trauma" and seeks to find patterns of thought whereby "trauma survivors can allow grace to speak to them" and "their own lived experiences" (Jones, 2009:100). In the instance where grace has enabled new patterns of thought, creativity, beauty and imagination mark the agency of women.

2.7 The graced agency in human flourishing

Female creativity, imagination and beauty extend beyond the affirmation of human agency to a means of participation in "God's good creation" (Jones, 2004a: 265). When women enact the creativity of God, God's glory is embodied (Jones, 2004a: 265). Serene Jones delineates creativity as follows (2004a: 265):

> Our understanding of creativity goes something like this: As creature made by the Creator God, we are called to participate actively in God's good creation. The challenge of the Christian life, in this context, is to determine how this creativity might best be enacted. Faithful Creativity is then when Christians seek to mimic God's own creative intentions for the world. The embodiment of this creativity entails the embodiment of God's glory. At the heart of these descriptions is the claim that glory is something that we apprehend not just intellectually but through the full range of our senses: it is imaged and embodied. This implies that glory has to do with form, shape, and substance.

Jones also warns the reader of unfaithful account of human creativity (2004a:266):

> Just as creativity may be construed as faithful, depicting the goodness and glory of God made manifest on earth, creativity can also be employed unfaithfully, "when we exercise creativity without imagining God's creative intentions, we risk constructing a "hyperreality" that has no relationship to God's desire for the restoration of the world. Creativity divorced from imagining what God desires produces fantasy worlds that serve as escapes from reality.

[37] Serene Jones references the contribution of Judith Herman as, "Judith Herman, *Trauma and Recovery: The Aftermath of Violence- from Domestic Abuse to Political Terror* (New York: Basic Books, 1977), 52." (2009:170).

Two female voices in the New Testament are introduced to depict how female agency is related to sin and creativity. These voices are analysed with the purpose of, "(1) explor[ing] the ways in which experiences of traumatic violence in our lives can disable our capacity to create in manner that enhance our lives and the lives of others" (Jones, 2004a:268) and to (2) "suggest how understanding ourselves as 'sinners' can, in some instances, enable us more faithfully to create with joy and beauty, particularly in contexts where lived experience of harm seems to have stunted our abilities to craft our world in meaningful ways" (Jones, 2004a:268).

The two women are Mary, the mother of Jesus, who is depicted as the "quintessential model of creativity" that is called to "bear Divinity" and a woman in the book of Matthew, whom Serene Jones names "Rachel" (2004a:269). "She is a woman who has been undone by traumatic violence: her spirit fractured by that mythic event the Christian tradition has named "the Slaughter of the Innocents" (Jones, 2004a:270).

Rachel's story is described as "Trauma and Creativity," where Trauma is the result of "social sin[38]" effecting "feelings of powerlessness, memory loss, a loss of personal voice, experiencing an unforgiving habit of thought and with all trust in the world violated[39]" (Jones, 2004a:274). A depiction of "how sin undoes us as creative beings who embody the glory of God" (Jones, 2004a:274). Mary "demonstrates that recognizing our identity as sinners can, in fact, simultaneously precipitate our acting in creative and transformative ways"(Jones, 2004a:278. "This process is initiated by Mary coming to terms with the identity which God has given her, 'Many generations will call me blessed,' she insists, recognizing the role she is playing, in the present moment, as a creative agent" (Jones, 2004a:278). "Because she owns up to who she is, she is able not only to imagine a different future, but to envision her place in it" (2004a:278).

Serene Jones creates a scenario where these two women meet to illustrate the way creativity might be sparked in this meeting. "Maybe standing there, Rachel is able to catch a glimpse of grace, a fleeting hint of redemption, a sense of the hope that long ago faded…What kind of grace is capable of meeting her loss?" (2004a:281). The crucified Christ communicates this grace, "Prevenient - and enhancing grace" that "bears the double mark of being at once a new freely bestowed, externally composed gift and a deeply familiar, intimately known presence- a grace both foreign and indigenous to us" (Jones, 2004a: 281-282). The glory of Christ lies in a particular form of love, expresses Jones: "It has no corollary…It simply is the truth of that moment, in all its inexhaustible particularity" (2004a:283).

Jones explains (Jones, 2009: 124):

> The good news it reveals to her … is that even if she never knows or acts as the creative, glorifying woman she was created to be, her glory shines nonetheless. It shines in the inexhaustible and brilliant particularity of her existence, in all its horrifying, lost details.

Jones affirms, "She is loved: she is glorified and glorifies" (Jones, 2004a:283). Serene Jones describes how grace affirms the agency of women and as a result, their creativity, beauty and imagination.

Grace not only enables an individual to participate in God's creative activity, but also provides the forum wherein an individual becomes the embodiment of God's glory. The embodiment of God's glory is the epitome of a flourishing and happy disposition. Serene Jones indicates how God's relating

[38]"The reality of larger structures of oppression that diminish the flourishing of humanity" (Jones, 2004a:270).
[39] All of the aspects mentioned previously express the negation of agency, time, voice, permission and call, "five theological features of "the self" that "are crucial to the creativity of women" (Jones, 2004a:267).

with humans through doctrine and Scripture forms a healing performance where individuals and the community of faith are given a new role to play in the redemptive narrative. The performance of a script marked by grace is one characterised by both freedom and form as well as adornment and forgiveness.

2.8 Conclusion

Feminist theory and Christian theology are indeed companionable wisdom in Serene Jones' delineation of flourishing. Feminist theory in its critical disposition toward the construction of identities helps Jones to question readings of doctrine and Scripture that are life negating. Feminist theory moves from a critical disposition toward an emancipatory vision of human existence, a vision evident in Jones' re-reading of the doctrine of justification and sanctification.

Doctrine and Scripture captures the imagination of its audience (Jones, 2009:13), evoking habits of thought that are transformative in nature (Jones, 2002:56). The habits of thought are perpetuated through imitation of Christ, which assigns to an individual an identity other than their own. In light of a disordered imagination, the antithesis of flourishing, performance of an alien righteousness reorders the imagination through grace. Serene Jones' therapeutic soteriology undergirds her belief that grace enables the freedom and agency of a woman (2004a: 265). A flourishing disposition is consequently one where the imagination continuously reimagines itself in relation to Christ's redemptive narrative. In addition, a flourishing disposition marks the absence of oppression (Jones, 2004a:260). Through the lens of feminist theory, Jones indicates how gendered readings of doctrine and Scripture have reinforced an oppressive logic in society (also called structural oppression (2000:89)).

Happiness may be understood to be intertwined in Serene Jones' logic of the imagination. In the case where an imagination is disordered, women are unable to construct their identities premised on their relation to God and the community. The inability to imagine oneself in relation to God and others with the negation of freedom and agency (which is also called oppression) is a disposition of unhappiness. A state devoid of flourishing is unhappy, as the disordered imagination cannot relate to itself as agent participating in salvation. The logic may be turned on its head; if a woman's imagination is re-ordered through the performance of the redemptive narrative, agency and freedom is assigned to her by means of grace (Jones, 2000:64). She is an individual who is in a constant position of flourishing.

Chapter 3
Happy? Ellen Charry on human flourishing

"Happiness … is a state of the soul that can be cultivated through a certain way of knowing. It depends upon knowing, because knowing shapes the soul …" (Charry, 2004b:26).

3.1 Introduction

Ellen Charry has a unique approach to happiness captured in the phrase "Christian doctrine of happiness" (2010:x). The articulation "doctrine of happiness" with the definitive category "Christian" hints at three components that underlie her construction and "reclamation" of happiness for theology; its church-historical approach, happiness as a state of being and its dependence on knowledge of God (Charry, 1998b:379). Theology is described by Charry as not being "a theoretical enterprise - a set of ideas that ought to fit together like pieces of a puzzle. Theology is about knowing and growing in the love of God and our neighbour so that we flourish in the destiny that God has in mind for us" (2002:22).

The word "doctrine" with its ability to "shape a way of life that forms people for living their lives excellently" (Charry, 2010:ix) undergirds Ellen Charry's excursus of happiness. Doctrine serves for Charry as theoretical framework through which happiness and flourishing is addressed. The act of flourishing is constituted by the mutual enjoyment between God and humanity, which has as its result happiness. Happiness understood as a continuous flourishing disposition is not conditional but a state of being that defines the individual. Charry argues (2011a:240):

> The argument is simple. God created for his[40] own enjoyment. God enjoys himself when creation flourishes. Therefore, God intends that we flourish. To tend to our own flourishing and that of the rest of creation...

She continues to state (Charry, 2011a:240):

> The starting point of the inquiry is that God created for his own pleasure and enjoyment. God's hope for creation is that it flourish that he may rejoice in the beauty and strength of his creative genius. Turning the Christian discussion of happiness toward God's happiness draws us toward a delightful life that furthers God's enjoyment of creation by means of our flourishing and that of the rest of the material world.

Doctrine is the arena where academic theology, the Augustinian focus on beauty, truth and goodness[41], soteriology and the search after knowing God come together to unravel the human striving after happiness. It is here that the distinctively Christian nature of doctrine comes to the fore as Ellen Charry engages with the New Testament, Old Testament and the patristic tradition to uncover a "temporal teaching of happiness" (2011a:23). Happiness, as temporal entity has enjoyed less attention than an eschatological understanding of happiness. Charry draws the reader's attention to this reality in her book, *God and the art of happiness* (2010: ix):

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[40]Ellen Charry remarks in a footnote regarding her use of pronouns: "In writing this work I have struggled with the question of gender with regard to pronouns for God. Since this work focuses solely on figures who wrote in the pre-modern period, when there was no question regarding the use of masculine pronoun, I have decided to respect their thought world because to do otherwise would be artificial and jarring. This should not be interpreted as excluding other possibilities for current theology but simply as respecting those from whom I seek to learn ..." (1997a:30).

[41] Charry understands the themes of beauty, truth and goodness to be evident of a therapeutic dimension within Augustine's reflections (2000c:453).

> My attention turned to happiness when my beloved husband and companion of forty years died an untimely and pointless death. The gap between eschatological happiness and temporal happiness needs to be addressed because people experience hardship and grief that sets them off balance, and they wonder whether they can ever be happy again in this life, or whether life amount to no more than a vale of tears simply to be slogged through somehow in hopes of a heavenly reward.

Charry introduces the notion of asherism to express how earthly happiness may be pursued (2003a:39):

> Jesus boldly begins his formal teaching with a set of traits and circumstances that redescribe radical holiness, although he calls it happiness or blessedness. *Makarios* in the LXX translates "ašrê", the first word of the Psalter…The NRSV translates the first word in the Psalter "happy," while in Matthew it renders *makarios* "blessed." The assumption is that happiness and blessedness rest on the same circumstances and conditions.

Asherism denotes a particular understanding of God, where goodness, beauty and wisdom are mutually reinforcing (Charry, 2002a:176). Knowledge of God evokes a response in the knower termed "sapience" where knowledge is internalised and transformation takes place. The word "sapience" consequently describes the process through which knowledge becomes wisdom by the act of connecting the knower to the known (God) (Charry, 2006a:167). Moreover, Ellen Charry shows that (2006a:167):

> the participation of knower and known in each other is the blessing of being known, knowing, and learning. God is blessed by our knowing him, we are blessed by knowing him…If knowing well, sometimes gently and sometimes harshly, (trans)forms us through –and even at times into- itself, it is indeed true that knowledge cannot be directed other than toward wisdom or toward folly.

Charry continues in her article "Walking in the truth: on knowing God" (2006a:167):

> strong knowing is a dynamic and interactive process in which both the known and the knower are constantly shaping each other. Good knowledge is directed toward wisdom and bad knowledge goes toward folly. Knowing is a spiritual craft or art by means of which the soul grows by God's grace…Good knowing is sapiential: it is only possible by divine grace.

The process of coming to know God presents itself in sacraments, liturgy and obedience to God's commandments, reverberating Ellen Charry's choice for "asherism." Asherism denotes a position marked by knowledge of God that enables the enjoyment of God through obedience to God's commandments. Happiness describes the moment where knowledge of God, obedience to God's commandments and enjoyment of God marks the life of an individual.

It is accordingly important for Ellen Charry to emphasise the salutary role of knowledge of God because it shapes the way a life is lived excellently. Living a life excellently is predicated on the notion of asherism where obedience to God's commandments communicates a particular knowledge of God. When it is understood that God wills the flourishing of creation through God's commandments, life is enjoyed and lived excellently. Knowledge and God were divorced however which endangers the salutarity of Knowledge of God. For this reason Ellen Charry seeks to reclaim knowledge and God from "secular captivity" (2010:xii).

3.2 Knowledge of God

Knowledge and happiness are two concepts Ellen Charry seeks to reclaim from "secular captivity" (2010:xii). She traces the separation of knowledge and God through the history of the twelfth and thirteenth century, the separation of knowledge and goodness in the seventeenth century and the

separation of rational truth and wisdom in the twentieth century (Charry, 2006a:145-147). Each respective crisis dislodged knowledge of God, goodness and truth from another leaving in its wake an impoverished understanding of happiness. Charry systematically treats each perspective individually indicating its relation to the other and its relevance to a theological understanding of happiness.

In addition to dislodging a theological understanding of happiness from God, goodness and truth, the epistemological crises evoked a response from the church which divided it. Ellen Charry consequently takes issue with the 'academizing' (2006a:145) of theology as knowledge of God underlies happiness and human flourishing. In the act of making theology an objective science, happiness recedes to the margins where secular notions have constructed it as a fleeting disposition. Charry's argument for the reclamation of happiness begins with Athanasius, Augustine and Aquinas as antitheses of the present day dichotomy between knowledge of God and happiness.

Knowledge of God and happiness are themes Ellen Charry discusses separately by deconstructing each notion in terms of its reception history, the implication of past dichotomies and its relevance for the other. Once she has engaged with each respective perspective, she draws knowledge of God and happiness into conversation with another. Charry's priority toward the flourishing of humanity leads her to engage with the asherist commandments in the New and Old Testament. Asherist commands enable a way of life characterised by "sustained flourishing as result of living wisely and being carefully guided by reverence for God" (Charry, 2011c:347), a life Ellen Charry describes as happy (2011c:347).

Ellen Charry draws a thematic inclusio in her literature on happiness. In *By the renewing of your minds* (1997a), she begins to show how knowing God is salvific by nature. In light of the division evoked by modernity between sapience and science, Charry proposes that this division is artificial and counter intuitive. Athanasius, Augustine and Aquinas serve as examples where such a divide was not acknowledged. Charry continues thereafter to implicate a new form of knowing, which evokes happiness through participation, obedience and exemplification of Jesus Christ (2010:157), namely asherism. Asherism is a practical "living out" the understanding of God, which implicates individual and community. As human beings live in accordance to God's will, creation flourishes and when creation flourishes God enjoys Godself (Charry, 2011a:240).

God and the art of happiness (2010) illustrates how sapience and scientia as a unified form of knowing becomes realising eschatology (asherism) (Charry, 2010:110). The happiness wrought by Christ is realised on earth when in the act of participating and obeying God, we consciously enact out knowledge of becoming one with God. This beatific vision[42] transforms our character in order that we may live a virtuous life. "A Christian vision of the good life: Happy Pursuits" (2007) illustrates how Charry makes this point; "feeling good is the result of doing good in ordinary and common choices of daily life. We become happy not by pursuing fleeting moments of pleasure, but by being the self that

[42] Ellen Charry indicates the process through which the beatific vision provides Christians with a theological identity in her article, "Virtual Salvation" (2004a). She argues: "Our theological self-concept is as one who participates in the goodness, light, and beauty of God. It is at the intersection of God's being and his being creator that our true identity lies. Our self-concept is from God's being, not from the identity that the culture of wealth would impose upon us. Divine beauty is its own lure to our self-identification with the truly good, truly beautiful order of things" (Charry, 2004a:338,345,346). Charry likens this theological identity to virtual salvation, a salvific reality constituted by an entity which exists as centre of a Christian identity: "Although there is a real sense in which we are what we do, our virtual theological identity offers us a way to *do* what we *are.* It is an identity that we do not create and that we cannot destroy, even if we abandon it. Because these theological identities are where we have our most noble being, the can gather up and knit together the fragments of our tattered, socially constructed selves into a stronger, better fabric" (2004a:338,345,346).

God created us to be" (2007:31). It is later added that the choices involved in daily life has a moral dimension.

The inclusio culminates when Ellen Charry indicates how a sapiential knowledge of God, a characteristic form of knowing that underlies asherism, is strengthened when one realises this knowledge through various acts. A re-articulation of salutary happiness occurs by partaking in liturgical, as well as societal acts that re-emphasise our soteriological disposition. Charry describes this process as "knowledge which is toward wisdom" (2006a:167).

Ellen Charry suggests (2006a:167):

> I am suggesting here that good knowing is to be taught by what one seeks to know. This is a moral and communal art that requires well-developed instincts and tendencies. When done well, it shapes the souls for a wise, good, and productive life. Good knowing is sapiential: it is only possible by divine grace[43]. Therefore, a fuller way of talking about knowing will be to speak of it so that the skills and strengths of the soul are recognized. Learning happens in the soul.

Sapiential knowing accordingly underscores a reciprocal knowing between the one known and the one being known. Charry states that (2006a:167):

> Locating knowing in the soul enables us not only to reconnect the knower with the known but also to see the connection between truth and goodness. Knowledge here is not information that one either has or lacks but has better or worse access to, depending on divine grace empowered by one's training and setting. Knowledge is stronger and better – that is, truer – to the degree that one's soul, and that of others, is enhanced or damaged by it.

In two articles, "The Trinity and the Christian Life" (1997b) and "Academic Theology in Pastoral Perspective" (1993b), Ellen Charry understands Augustine to be motivated toward the right kind of knowing. She argues that (Charry, 2002c:114):

> Saint Augustine was plagued by the problem of knowing and not knowing throughout his life. He wanted to love God completely, but he was puzzled by how he could love what he did not know. Augustine wanted to know God, not in order to gain the power over others that knowledge brings, but in order to gain power over himself. Augustine exhibits the proper function of knowledge.

Wisdom and knowledge are differentiated in Augustinian thought; "Augustine devoted wisdom and rational judgments to knowledge … one important task of knowledge" Charry indicates (1993b:92):

> [is] to make moral judgments in accordance with the cardinal virtues, since knowledge is capable of rational normative judgment. Wisdom (which he calls the intellectual feature of the mind), by contrast, will be constituted by love and worship of God that makes us truly happy and blessed and finally able to share in God. Wisdom does not judge of, but delights in, God because it knows of God's gracious deed

[43] Ellen Charry recognises two moments in the grace of God; the first is how grace and the law are not in opposition to one another but a fulfilment of the promise of Christ's reign: "It is a mistake to oppose law and grace, for God's grace makes way for a radically transformed social and moral order. The law of Christ enables a new way of life that is obedient to God" (Charry, 2003a:34). Secondly, grace centres our practices in Christ, "both Pauline and Matthean interpretations of faith in Jesus Christ elucidate a new and demanding vision of religious practice that applies divine grace given through Christ," (Charry, 2003a:34) moreover, "Cross and resurrection, not the Decalogue, are front and centre for Paul. They reformulate godliness and regulate the practice of a pure life. They are the grace of God for the reconciliation and true empowerment of Jews and Gentiles as one people…Purity lies in the spiritual strength to live as Christ died: testifying to the power and strength of letting go that others may live. Christ embodied the wisdom of God that now belongs to those who belong to Christ. One should not worry about how one makes one's way into the body of Christ …" (Charry, 2003a:38).

> from Scripture. So, judgments regulate our conduct and guide our thinking, while contemplation brings happiness through a relationship with God.

A further contribution lies in the way Augustine links knowledge and wisdom to sapience, so that knowledge is constituted by the material things of creation which teach us about God (Charry, 2002c:114). Ellen Charry continues with Augustine's train of thought: "Augustine understood that wisdom is spiritually superior to correct information, for it uplifts the knower, bringing one into intimate contact with the known" (2002c:114-115). Sapience is constituted in Charry's opinion by knowledge that is attained from creation, as well as liturgical ceremonies. It is a knowledge of God "that elicits love", which forms a particular identity and purpose in Christians. Ellen Charry affirms (1998b:379):

> [sapience provides] a godly standard of goodness and a vision of coherent living that that can serve as a comprehensive guide to an intelligent and stable, that is to say, happy life. The belief is that knowing and loving God the Holy Trinity is genuinely salutary for people because we really need God and God is really food for us.

In light of Ellen Charry's concern that knowledge of God should shape the character of humans, she seeks to indicate how moral and spiritual formation takes place as natural result of knowing God. Charry denotes the process whereby character is transformed through knowledge of God as the "pastoral function" of Christian doctrine (1997a:5).

Ellen Charry illustrates by means of Augustine how the academising of theology as response to the separation of knowledge and God, is a problematic one. Augustine is an example, for Ellen Charry, who communicates the right form of knowing, namely, one that connects the knower to the known. The inability of academic theology, according to Ellen Charry, to connect the knower with the known, leads her to ask whether there is currently a divided theological task.

3.3 A divided theological task?

Ellen Charry's emphasis on the pastoral function of Christian doctrine is motivated by her concern that theology has lost its ability to shape the character of its audiences. This is due in part, to modern culture[44], along with theology's lack of priority toward the facilitation of an audience to come to know God[45]. "… a central theological task is to assist people to come to God. This in itself is a contested idea for modern theology, which has moved away from primary Christian beliefs and focused on theological method instead" (Charry, 1997a:5).

Charry describes the divide by referring to David Dawson[46] in a discussion of literary theory and theology (Dawson in Charry, 1997a:31):

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[44]Ellen Charry, in her article "Virtual Salvation", describes modern culture, in particular American culture, to be manipulative and governed by consumerism. "Consumerism is successful in part because it has developed techniques to insure our dependence on it. First, of course, it is obvious that we cannot survive apart from it. There is no opting out. It is the air we breathe. Still, its power to construct our identities is more than straightforward: it is also manipulative … we will briefly consider five manipulative strategies that keep the system going: calculated dissatisfaction, the illusion of personal power, the invention of self-perpetuating need, impulse buying, and the craving for success. These strategies appeal to and then exacerbate greed and vanity to enhance the sense of self-importance" (Charry, 2004a:336).

[45] In her book, *By the renewing of your minds* (1997a), Charry affirms; "thus the primary task of theology is to facilitate its audience to come to know God. This task has waned**,** however, with the Enlightenment" (1997a:5).

[46] Ellen Charry's engagement with Dawson is referenced as follows by Charry, "Dawson, David (1995). *Literary Theory: Guides to Theological Inquiry.* Minneapolis: Fortress Press." (1997a:249).

> Academic theology turned into theological method at about the same time practical literary criticism turned into literary theory, and perhaps for much the same reason- as an apologetic or protectionist strategy by humanists who found themselves increasingly marginalized by the rising prestige of science and technology.

The modern disparage between method and Christian belief became increasing evident for Ellen Charry in her study of classical texts (2003b:2):

> Although I started this project as an exercise in historical theology, a constructive thesis emerged: when Christian doctrines assert the truth about God, the world and ourselves, it is a truth that seeks to influence us. As I worked through the texts, the divisions of the modern theological curriculum began making less and less sense to me. I could no longer distinguish apologetics from catechesis, or spirituality from ethics or pastoral theology[47]. And I no longer understood systematic or dogmatic theology apart from all of these …

Ellen Charry's theological agenda is distinct from modern theological agendas: "I realized that I was uncovering a norm of theological integrity that had become unintelligible to the modern discipline" (1997a:viii-ix). The reading of classical texts is "an invitation to consider how theology intends to shape readers for the good life" (Charry, 1997a:viii-ix).

The context wherein Christian theology began life was "in a time of epistemic security, when God was believed to be real and some knowledge of him and wisdom through him to be possible. Under these conditions, the goal of reflection on God and the things of God was to understand them for the sake of a good life as well as eternal life" (Charry, 2006a:144). When coupled with its Hellenistic environment, Charry (2006a:145) states:

> knowledge is true if it leads us into goodness, making us happy and good. The idea that knowing good things make us good implies continuity between the knower and what she knows. It is not simply to be cognizant of the truth but to be assimilated into it.

Ellen Charry describes two forms of knowledge that shape the Christian identity; the first is practical and the second is concerned with the content of the Christian character. She describes each respectively (Charry, 1997a:5-6):

> In short, primary doctrines are the practically orientated content of the faith. They enable a religious community to propose a pattern of life to its members and nurture them in it as best it can. Second-order reflection should support the primary doctrines of a community and so is indirectly of practical import.

Christians should seek the knowledge of God, Charry argues, so that one can "come to dwell in the truth: for the truth will make us happy and good, and in that way, free" (2006a:145). The vision of truth was undermined, however, by three epistemological crises (Charry, 2006a:145). Ellen Charry describes the first crisis as one where the task of theology shifted from being salutary to academic (Charry, 2006a: 145). Ellen Charry explains, "Knowledge of God became possible on purely intellectual grounds, regardless of the piety of the theologian" (Charry, 2006a: 145). The crisis came with the "West's recovery of Aristotle in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries" (Charry, 2006a: 145)

[47] Ellen Charry reminds her readers of medieval Christian women theologians who abstained from this division: "To put it more precisely, the women interpreted the doctrinal heritage through, not apart from, the spiritual life. They viewed the tasks of theology through their own yearning for God that they believed others shared. The exegesis of doctrine served to bring them and their readers into the divine presence, or perhaps to remind their readers that they already dwell in the divine presence. They sought to teach their disciples the skills needed to maximize their life in God" (Charry, 2003b:3).

where theology "was pressed in ever more theoretical and less practical directions" (Charry, 2006a: 145). Ellen Charry draws the implication of this crisis for theology (Charry, 2006a: 145):

> This distancing made normal theology impossible. Gradually, knowing something to be true took on overtones of acknowledgment and assent to what one judges to be the case rather than being an investment in understanding for the sake of becoming happy, wise, and good.

The second crisis occurred during the seventeenth century, when (Charry, 2006a:146):

> experimental science and empiricism transformed truth again- and therewith theology. In order to maintain-or perhaps regain- intellectual credibility, theology adopted the modern positivist and rationalist understandings of knowledge. These understandings separated knowledge from goodness (and therefore wisdom), and sapience remained at bay.

The third and final crisis was "the modern critical philosophical understandings of truth, knowledge, and goodness" (Charry, 2006a:146), which predicts the "final turn of theology" (Charry, 2006a:146-147). Ellen Charry understands the final crisis to be an opportune moment to reclaim sapiential theology. She describes (Charry, 2006a:146-147):

> Modern epistemology is also under investigation from a postcritical perspective that is not nihilistic: this perspective is reconnecting the knower to the knowledge and truth with goodness, so that knowledge of God may again be epistemologically possible. The recognition that knowing is a shared moral activity that requires excellences of soul can lend itself to retrieving truth that moves toward goodness-not in a sentimental way but in a way that truly recognizes our modern experience.

The increasing divide between rational truth and sapience is illustrated by Charry's use of the phrase "academic theology." The rise of academic theology runs parallel to what she calls "the spiritual crisis of modernity" (Charry, 1997b:368), where "theological disciplines are more oriented to the academy than the church" (Charry, 2000a:73). Academic theology is impoverished in its lack of priority toward "the cure of souls." Charry describes in her article, "To what end knowledge? The academic captivity of the church" (2000a:74):

> Classical theology, following Paul, developed in response to specific problems that arose in the church. In the ancient church, theology defined and defended the church's teachings in order to help people know, love, and enjoy God, that they might live a noble, righteous, and godly life by dwelling in God on earth and beyond. Knowing God was essential to being transformed by and partaking of God's sapience, goodness, and beauty. In short, the cure of souls was central to the theological task.

There is a close connection for Ellen Charry to the divide between sapience and academic theology, namely the spiritual crisis of late modernity. In her discussion on the spiritual formation by the doctrine of the trinity, she describes that "under the influence of modern notions of truth, theology became more interested in the coherence of Christian doctrines than in the ability of those doctrines to sponsor a godly life" (Charry, 1997b:168). Charry argues (1997b:178):

> In accommodating modern sensibilities, theology neglected spiritual nurture: helping Christian teachings help people know, love, and enjoy God. Classical theology was an exercise in Christian paideia- an intellectual and spiritual undertaking-helping people both to understand and be formed by loving the God they confess. This neglect has contributed to the spiritual crisis of the day.

In addition, academic theology (Charry, 1996:114-115):

> has turned from encouraging personal reform through attachment to God toward articulating the logic of Christian doctrines, unearthing the history of Christian texts and politics, and analysing ethical reasoning.

> It posits an autonomous self, formed in advance of engagement with God, whose reason and knowledge manipulate the ideas of the tradition ... The academic model cultivates and employs the intellectual virtues for the correction and interpretation of the tradition ...

Ellen Charry seeks to counter the modern tendency by reclaiming knowledge of God that is formative of Christian character. In light of a discussion on the spiritual crisis of modernity and its conception of the autonomous self, she argues (Charry, 1997b:369, 371):

> Thinking of theological doctrines, especially the doctrine of the Trinity, as an instrument of spiritual formation in this regard will probably strike some readers as odd…One reason for this…is that doctrine is no longer viewed as a means of spiritual nurture…In short, Christian theology can offer a path to an alternative source of formation for late-modern life, a source to which a secular sensibility has no access: God. Christians have a distinctive contribution to make in the area of spiritual nurture.

The case is made for the renewal of salutary readings, as knowledge of God enables humans to flourish by exercising particular habits of mind (also understood as sapience). Athanasius, Augustine and Aquinas are three voices who echo, for Ellen Charry, the priority toward right forms of knowing (2010:ix).

3.4 Towards a sapiential reading of happiness

To engage with doctrine as a purely intellectual endeavour apart from a practical agenda is methodologically unsatisfactory for Ellen Charry. Athanasius, Augustine and Aquinas are three proponents who displayed both intellectual rigor and pastoral concern. Charry notes in this regard (1992:33):

> While texts were analysed intellectually … a careful examination of many dogmatic treatises reveals concern for the moral effects of doctrine alongside coherence and intelligibility … The practical side of doctrinal exegesis, asks after the divine rationale: Why did God do such and such, or do it in that way?

Ellen Charry continues to describe how texts influence the reader through its rationale (1992:33):

> The practical voice of dogmatic exegesis … assumes that, while the theological minds that carved out the tradition did seek to resolve logical problems that seemed to beset Christian claims, at least some of them some of the time also kept the big picture in view. That is, they viewed dogmatic explication of the faith as an instrument of individual and societal formation and transformation, as an instrument of moral pedagogy.

Moral pedagogy was a practice present in Greek culture in "classical thinkers from Socrates to Marcus Aurelius", who "were concerned to elucidate a way of thinking about reality that promoted *arête*: moral excellence and proper citizenship" (Charry, 1992:33). Charry establishes a parallel between Greek *paideia* and the salutary function of Scripture. She cites Jaeger[48] (Jaeger in Charry, 1992:34):

> Jaegar argued that Plato's philosophy was not simply an intellectual search for abstract notions of eternal truth, but a proposal for *paideia:* a disciplined educational approach to Greek cultural values that sought to train morally grounded, socially responsible government leadership. In other words, truth for Plato was not neutral: it was morally formative … Jaeger noted that Platonic *paideia* prepared the way for Christian *paideia,* which adapted the Platonic heritage of philosophy as an instrument of moral and, thereby, social formation.

[48]Ellen Charry references Werner Jaegar from his book *Paideia: The ideals of Greek Culture*, "Jaeger, Werner (1944). *Paideia: The Ideals of Greek Culture.* 3 vols. Oxford: Basil Blackwell." (1997a: 250).

Christian *paideia* express second-order assertions that are concerned with "the rules and principles that maintain a community's authentic identity, assure the consistency of its teachings, and relate its authentic self-understanding to competing claims" (Charry, 1997a:225). Second-order assertions are interdependent with primary doctrines, for primary doctrines as "first-order assertions" "teach about God and propose right courses of action, virtues, and a way of life in which members are to be nurtured by the community" (Charry, 1997a:225).

Three bishops who were concerned with second-order assertions were Athanasius, Augustine and Aquinas. Each respectively contributed to the notion of loving, enjoying and knowing God as foundation for happiness. Their primary task, affirms Ellen Charry, was to be "theologians, pastors and administrators of the church" (1997a:86), a position which necessitated a loyalty to both Scripture and community, she proceeds to state (Charry, 1997a:86):

> These bishops of learning and broad vision were able to think the Christian faith through carefully, with one eye trained on the spiritual needs of their parishioners and the other on the church's interaction with the dominant culture, for they flourished as the church inherited the mantle of empire. That is, they believed that God's work in Jesus Christ provided a firm foundation for a moral society. Indeed, they understood the unpacking of Christian doctrines as *paideia* ...

The task of theologians consequently became "to explain Christian claims but also to create a morally coherent culture that would educate and form persons for the change of ages happening in their own day (Charry, 1997a:86).

Athanasius contributes to first-order assertions in his doctrine of God. Ellen Charry states that his focus was on (Charry, 1997a:228):

> on the good life that resulted from coming to know God the father properly. And since our knowledge of the Father is through the Son, articulating the relationship between the Father and the Son precisely became central to his argument.

Augustine, on the other hand, understood the act of knowing God as (Charry, 1997a:229):

> the key to mature and refined happiness. His attempt to render the doctrine of the trinity transparent by appealing to a series of trinities in ourselves, was to help seekers over the mental gridlock that the doctrine invites. But in addition to the cognitive clarity he sought to provide, he also led seekers into the mystery of God. By linking God intimately with ourselves, Augustine brought his readers to a deeper self-understanding, by means of which they make their own way to the good life.

Finally, Thomas Aquinas, representing medieval piety, sought to synthesise theological knowledge with secular philosophy with the purpose of demonstrating that all knowledge comes from and leads to God. It is from these three individuals that modern theology derives its systematic urge, although the notion of truth toward which it drives is no longer understood in St. Thomas's holistic sense (Charry, 1997a:230).

Premised on the notion that God seeks to enjoy humanity and humanity God, Ellen Charry shows how happiness is understood as imitation of Christ (Athanasius) (1993a:267) and assimilation[49] to the "beauty, wisdom and goodness of God", which lures us to the cross (Augustine) (2006c:137). She

[49] In the article, "The Moral Function of Doctrine", Ellen Charry indicates how Anselm's theology of the cross presses beyond assimilation toward imitation: "Anselm's direct statements that Christ became human and died as an example mean that Christians are pressed beyond assimilating behaviour that befits the earthly children of God toward the salvation of others regardless of the cost to himself. This, it seems, and not less, is the standard God has set for us" (1992:43).

continues with a reading of Athanasius, who understood happiness to be the restoration of human dignity through imitation.

3.4.1 Athanasius: happiness as restored human dignity

Athanasian Christology is situated in a pre-critical period where (Charry, 1993a:265):

> the assumption was that God was the singular source for the dignity and flourishing of human persons. Only by understanding and submitting to the love and demands of God could a person's freedom, relations to self, others, and things be properly ordered. And only when these are properly ordered could one flourish. On the classical view, both the means whereby salvation is effected for human persons and the effect the economy of salvation is to have on believers were seamless whole. That is, God's soteriological activity was implicitly the standard for human personhood, the norm for relationships on the horizontal plane.

Ellen Charry cites Athanasius' analysis of the human problem in *Contra Gentes* (1993a:268):

> in terms of unhappiness caused by a disordered and disoriented mind that has wandered from God. Happiness, that is, the capacity to direct human life aright, was buried, lost, and forgotten through generations of fumbling around in the dark. The good life, that is the virtuous life, was trashed beneath indignities that misused body, mind, and soul. The process began by forgetting who God is. This led to losing touch with who we really are: creatures destined for happiness at the hands of the one who created us. This loss led to idolatry which in turn destroyed human dignity, and turned human intercourse into a jungle of violence, corruption, and deceit. In short, civilisation was on the verge of collapse. And God saw that it was not good at all.

Athanasius' posteriori form of argumentation is situated in a therapeutic Christian faith "because it leads followers back to the father of Christ. And since it produces goodness, it must be true" (Charry, 1997a:89). For Athanasius, Charry underscores, "human dignity comes from our relatedness to God, as given by God in creation. Unlike the modern view, our dignity is seen in our connectedness to God, not in our autonomy" (1997a:90). Our relation to God is situated by Athanasius' linkage of "human *logismoi* with the divine *Logos".* Athanasius consequently finds the source of knowledge of God within humanity itself. A disordered mind or intellect is then "a wandering from God" (Charry, 1993a:270). The only way through which humanity can be saved is by God saving "us from ourselves by renewing us in his image, reforming our minds, and shaping our actions to their proper end" (Charry, 1993b:91-92).

"Properly ordered human dignity should wean people from devotion to debasing fantasies of the imagination that lead to misery and suffering[50]" (Charry, 1993a:271).

Athanasian Christology was the means to a restored human dignity through participation in God. A complex argument pertaining to "how" humanity is made participants in the divine followed in *Contra Arianos III*. At risk of speaking of deification, Athanasius drew a distinction between a "constituted" nature and an "acquired" nature. Ellen Charry concurs that (1993a:273):

> Our adoption is of a categorically different nature. It is an act of grace. As Christ teaches us about God and leads us back to proper contemplation and focus on God, we become children of God by participation

[50]Ellen Charry continues to describe Athanasius' centring of the *logismos* in the divine ordering of creation. "Having blamed social and moral deterioration on forgetting God and consequently developing disordered thought patters, and having pointed out that we are equipped to know God properly throughout capacity to think clearly, beginning in #35 to the end of *Contra Gentes*, Athanasius carefully explained the divine orderliness evident in creation with which we are out of tune" (Charry, 1993a:271).

> (*metachon).* Those who live in obedience to [Christ] have eternal life as a reward while Christ has divine attributes inherently.

Charry deconstructs the particular role of Christ in taking on a human body (1997a:97):

> The point of the Logos's taking on a body turns out to be more than simply destroying the fear of death. Christ not only reveals the Father to us: he also teaches us through the intimacy of their relationship itself. By imitating them we find a standard for our relationships with one another. Social harmony breaking out among new Christians, spoken of in the *DI*, stems from becoming with the Lord, "having the one Lord in ourselves," not by "identity or equality" but by imitation.

It is by observing God's "mechanisms to lure us home" (Charry, 1993a:279) that the reader comes to understand God's priority toward the happiness of humanity. Ellen Charry observes (1993a:279):

> God's empathy, compassion, and concern for our perceived needs enable us to attend to God over all the other concerns vying for our attention and leading us in other directions. But once God has our attention we are confronted with his way of dealing with us that inevitably becomes the standard for our own behaviour … It is neither healing as such, nor self-sacrifice as such, nor resurrection as such, that are specific behaviours to be imitated. Rather the teaching that is pressed home is the exclusive concern for our welfare and happiness, and the recognition that we are not able to devote ourselves to the welfare and happiness of those in our charge by being told to do so: we must be led to do so by having our own needs met first[51].

In its final analysis, Ellen Charry writes, "it seems that Athanasius concludes that God is bent on telling us that compassion and care cultivate human dignity and human dignity leads to human excellence" (1993a:281). Human beings are not always aware of God's compassion and care as "we spurned God and our own intelligence and fashioned gods for ourselves, producing social and personal degeneracy" (Charry, 1997a:98).

The concept of *homoousios* is utilised by Ellen Charry to bridge the gap between degenerate intellect and God's care for humanity (1997a:99):

> We have seen that living in accord with the beauty of God's creation and imitating God are central features of the Athanasian plan for our restoration. God is self-consciously teaching us how to live rightly. In this sense he has only the deepest respect for us … From this perspective, insistence on the *homoousios* becomes more intelligible. Christ breaks through our fear to reveal God. And since God wants us to model ourselves on him, it is paramount that the standard for our knowledge of dignity, compassion, and caring indisputable and crystalline. Thus, the aretegenic[52] function of the *homoousios* emerges. If the Son were not the very ordered goodness of God but became the Son at a point in time, he could not restore us to our true nature or provide us with the standard of human excellence … Knowing

[51] Ellen Charry, in an attempt to indicate the aretological perspective in Athanasian Christology, explains: "We have seen that ordered harmony and balance and modelling are important features of Athanasius conceptual framework. And so it is not a very large step to take to conclude that throughout the execution of this detailed plan God is self-consciously teaching us how to deal with one another as he has dealt with us. God is only and utterly a loving parent" (1993:280).

[52] Charry substantiates her use of "aretegenic" in her article, "Academic theology in pastoral perspective": "I have reluctantly decided to suggest a new word to represent the moral and psychological dignity and honour which Christianity encourages. Aretogenic comes from the classical Greek word *arête,* excellence or virtue. I do not restrict it to the amenities of the Greek nobility as was the case in ancient Greece, but employ it in a broader sense to suggest the nobility of human life including both moral and intellectual responsibility and psychological wholeness" (1993b:101). She relates this to the forming potential within the church's liturgy, "more specifically to attend to the shaping effects theological doctrines ought to have – along with sacraments, liturgy, hymns, and preaching on crafting human personhood" (Charry, 1993b:102).

> God himself was necessary, he believed, in order for us to come to our senses, return to God, and flourish as God intended.

Ellen Charry shows in Athanasius' thought how God was understood to be the source for human dignity and flourishing. Human dignity was accordingly seen in the relation of humans to God. In the instance where human dignity was negated, restoration could take place by participating in God through Christ. Once it is established that happiness and human flourishing comes through the restoration of human dignity through the imitation of Christ, Charry continues to consider Augustine who believed relation to God to be the course of therapy for a happy life.

3.4.2 Augustine: happiness as a course of therapy

Ellen Charry sets out Augustine's Trinitarian theology as a means to introduce the notion of participation in the dignity of God (2000c:452):

> the Christian tradition contains within itself sources of an alternative identity, a God-centred identity that might at least act as a plumbline against which market-shaped identity may be measured and perhaps even function as a discriminating set of principles for wending one's way through culture.

Augustine's elaboration of Gen 1:27 serve as foundation for constructing such an alternative identity. Charry illustrates (2000c:453):

> Augustine … extended a theological self-concept beyond Christians to provide all persons with a God-centred self-concept by their very nature as God's creature. Human faculties reflect the triune rationality of God. He depicted the God-seeker as discerning this identity slowly by testing it out and eventually understanding oneself through it. The struggle to claim this deep relatedness to God requires turning away from false identities and toward the goodness, justice, wisdom, and beauty of the Trinity. Understanding oneself-and others-to reflect the unity and cooperation of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and to be claimed by their work of salvation on human behalf provides self-esteem and personal dignity that the world cannot give.

Ellen Charry focuses on Augustine's *De Trinitate* with its emphasis on the act of curing "diseased minds of seekers who conceive of God in bodily terms" (1997a:120) and to purify them so that they may "contemplate and have full knowledge of God's substance" (1997a:120). She indicates that the whole plan for the work is "to explain the missions of the Son and Holy Spirit in the context of the unity of God as a course of therapy for a happy life in God" (Charry, 1997a:120).

Charry affirms (1997a:90):

> In pursuance of our plan to train the reader in the things that have been made [e.g. Christ] (Rom. 1.20), for getting [the reader] to know [H]im by whom they were made, we come eventually to his image … [T]his is what is called mind or consciousness. The reform of the mind is necessary for knowing God.

The mind as the platform where humans come to experience and partake in God's divine beauty underscores Ellen Charry's concern of the modern distinction between sapience[53] and science. If knowledge is devoid of salutary implication, first-order assertions have no function in the Christian tradition. Charry states synonymously (1997a:27):

[53] "Sapience" is broadly defined by Ellen Charry as not being "a return to Augustine's precise understanding, but more generally a retrieval of theology's duty to promote grateful love of God while critically assessing the church's witness to the faith" (1993b:102).

> In theology's case this will mean attending to how God understands and renders us vulnerable for cultivation by engaging our hopes and aspirations as well as expanding our minds. That is, theology assumes that God is psychologically sophisticated.

In seeking to bridge the gap between sapience and science, Ellen Charry communicates the advantage of turning to an "aretegenic reading of doctrinal interpretations" (1997a:27), which "offer a notion of rationality that embraces the emotions as integral to the process of discernment and moral deliberation" (Charry, 1997a:27). She hints at the salutary potential of Augustine's Trinitarian theology: "Augustine realizes that emotions and behaviour are not readily vulnerable to the dictates of reason. He postulated that only divine grace, not any rational capacity within the individual, can provide the support needed for change" (Charry, 2001:125).

A soteriological divide occurred between an "ontological view of salvation" and a "functional view" (Charry, 1997a:149), whereby Ellen Charry suggests (1997:128):

> that it is time to re-examine the patristic understanding of happiness grounded in who we are in God- an understanding that died sometime in the Middle Ages[54], when salvation became narrowed to the question of how God forgives sins, and, specifically, whether he has forgiven mine.

The death of a "God-centred understanding of the human self" is described by Ellen Charry as an act of "marginalization" with ethical implications. "One result of this loss is that it is virtually impossible for Western Christians to see the social and ethical implications of formation through enjoyment of God" (1997a:129).

Three voices who seek to reintroduce both an ontological and functional view of salvation are cited by Ellen Charry. Gerhart Ladner[55] "points out that Augustine combated the spiritualistic depreciation of the creation that survived in Christian Platonism (Ladner in Charry, 1997a:130). Charry cites Ladner in "The aim of reformation" (Ladner in Charry, 1997a:130):

> is not spiritualization pure and simple, but rather an order in which spirit and matter both have their place though that of spirit will always be higher. Christian reformation is a process of becoming more and more similar to God, a process of deification accomplished by grace, not an adoption by nature [56]… The soul must turn toward God who has made it, and thus become consciously aware of its character as divine image: to be with God is to realize fully this image relation: to remember Him, to know Him, and to love Him-it is in other words, the reformation of the image of God in man.

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[54] Ellen Charry traces in a short hand manner the theological shifts in formulations of salvation: "In the medieval period, when the Western church developed an extensive and powerful penitential system, the understanding of salvation shifted dramatically, or one might say narrowed, from knowing and enjoying God to the remission of sins. With Anselm's *Cur Deus Homo*…soteriological interest bore down on the Incarnation (i.e., the cross) as the locus of forgiveness…Late medieval theologians wrestled with the role of grace in the remission of sins, but the locus remained the cross. Luther's reclamation of the gospel out of the tangle of medieval theology, especially the sacrament of penance, construed trust in God's mercy rather than the penitential system as the means of grace but maintained remission of sin as the soteriological juggernaut. Subsequent Protestant distrust of reason in favour of faith rendered Augustine's trust in the soteriological power of knowing the divine qualities anathema to the Reformed churches" (Charry, 1997a:128).

[55] Ellen Charry references Ladner's contribution as follows: "Ladner, Gerhard B. (1967). *The idea of Reform: Its Impact on Christian Thought and Action in the Age of the Fathers.* New York: Harper." (1997a: 251).

[56] Ellen Charry adds a disclaimer to this position: "My reading of *De Trinitate* supports Ladner's conclusion as long as the return to God accomplished by grace is recognised as a process of transformation of self-understanding. The process of coming to remember, know, and love God is simultaneous with the process of coming to one's senses- or, rather, becoming more and more like God is a process of coming to one's senses" (1997a:130).

The second thinker, Andrew Louth[57] argues Ellen Charry (Louth in Charry, 1997a:130):

> treats *De Trinitate* as a work of mystical theology designed as a search for God through introspective self-scrutiny. Louth sees Augustine as following a Plotinian model, yet differing from Plotinus by insisting on the doctrine of grace: the soul finds God only because God deigns to disclose himself both in history and to the mind. Louth argues that the craving for a return to God requires the seeker to reclaim and perfect the image of God in herself. Augustine assists the seeker in this process by disclosing love as a chief (and Trinitarian) function of the mind, so that through awareness of how it loves itself the soul comes to love the qualities of God disclose by the economy and move beyond the image into God himself.[58]

An important contribution in Louth's understanding of Augustine is clarified by Ellen Charry: "The point is not that a proper understanding of self leads to finding God but that a proper understanding of God is the only way to come (gradually) to a purified self- that is, a happy self" (1997a:131).

Isabelle Bochet[59] shifts the interpretive focus of *De Trinitate* toward the "transformation of the reader" as Augustine's primary task (Bochet in Charry, 1997a: 131). Ellen Charry remarks of Isabelle Bochet's contribution (Bochet in Charry, 1997a:131):

> Her work is particularly useful because she develops the anthropological side of Augustine's Trinitarian theology. Augustine sought to correct and transform human desire. Natural human desire is corrupt because, in searching for happiness, the self grasps at carnal objects- those that it knows best. But these desires cannot be sated, for the carnal objects themselves carry one away from the proper object of happiness and truth, indeed the authentic source of itself- God. The result of misplaced desire is lust, evil, and sin born out of ignorance and pride at thinking one can find happiness in self and transient pleasures … The distorted self is spiritual but starved, ill, and dying. So God, realizing that creaturely things that lead away from God in the first place can just as easily lead back toward God, sent the Son and Holy Spirit into the created order. For the desire for truth and happiness is irrepressible, and consequently, the repair of desire is possible.

Ellen Charry cites an epigram that sums up Bochet's thought on Augustine "the self is formed by creation, deformed by sin, and reformed by Christ" (Bochet in Charry, 1997a:131).

She further indicates how Ladner, Louth and Bochet have underlined the sapiential dimension of *De Trinitate*, which "prepares for an aretegenic reading" (Charry, 1997:132). The aretegenic reading is "one that illustrates how the doctrines constructed and elaborated therein, including the anthropology, the soteriology, and the epistemology, are linked in a self-conscious plan of reform of self through the economy of salvation, which discloses the beauty, truth, and goodness that is the being of God" (Charry, 1997a:132). In her chapter on Augustine in *By the renewing of your minds* (1997a), Charry does not enter into a detailed discussion on Augustine's Trinitarian soteriology, but rather seeks to indicate how Augustine's doctrine had a priority toward the moral shaping character of doctrine in its ability to rehabilitate the mind through coming to know God (2010:xii).

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[57] Ellen Charry cites the work of Louth as follows: "Louth, Andrew (1981). *The Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition: From Plato to Denys.* Oxford: Clarendon." (1997a: 251).

[58] An important methodological remark is made by Ellen Charry with regards to Louth's rationale, which runs parallel to Charry's theological agenda: "Louth notes (correctly) that 'Augustine is less concerned to illustrate the doctrine of the Trinity from his understanding of man, than to discover the true nature of and by means of the doctrine of the Trinity that he believes by faith'. Recognising one's likeness to God is requisite for ascending to God" (Louth, 1981 in Charry, 1997a:130).

[59] Ellen Charry draws on the work of Isabelle Bochet and references it as follows: "Bochet, Isabelle (1982). *Saint Augustin et le Désir de Dieu.* Paris: Études Augustiniennes." (1997a: 249).

Augustine underscores Ellen Charry's priority toward a particular form of knowing that transforms character. Charry accordingly believes that coming to know God is a process marked by the transformation of the self. In the transformation of the self, life is lived excellently, an act which underscores a happy and flourishing life. A shift occurred, however where knowledge of God was intellectualised. The increasing intellectualisation of knowledge of God is already present, for Ellen Charry, in the time of Aquinas.

3.4.3 Aquinas: happiness as a shift away from pathology driven psychology

Ellen Charry engages with the writings of Aquinas[60] to indicate two things; firstly, how theologians began to speak of knowledge from "being helpful to being correct" and second, how this turn resulted in an un-substantive description of happiness as enjoyment of God (2006a:157). When referring to academic theology, she asserts (Charry, 2006a:157):

> My argument will take issue with the modern consequence of this move precisely at this point: I will claim that cognition is insufficient and that a virtuous bent is necessary for good knowledge. To state this theologically: grace is needed for good knowledge.

Charry describes the effect of "intellectualizing belief (2006a:165):

> coupling theology as primary theory with belief as assent to that theory intellectualizes belief into a conceptual activity. It quite effectively removes sapience -wisdom for a good and happy life- from view because it centres on assent to correct church teaching to the exclusion of ascent to God.

The majority of Ellen Charry's comments on Aquinas are read in light of the divide found within academic theology. Despite the emphasis on academic theology, Aquinas continues to be an apt conversation partner for Charry in consideration of happiness. Aquinas represents an amalgamation between philosophy and theology, which has as its result the intellectualisation of happiness (Charry, 2010:88). Aquinas' Christology is however of particular interest to Ellen Charry when engaging with happiness. She describes the "agendum" of Aquinas as follows (Charry, 1997a:185):

> The rhetorical effect of Thomas's presentation of atonement theories and of his exegesis of the passion narrative is certainly to strengthen the believer's conscience, or what modern psychology would call her superego, by focussing attention on the importance of dealing properly with wrongdoing, whether by punishing the evildoer or, as God chose, sparing the one responsible and making amends himself…Thomas wants the reader to engage the issues in order to grow in self-understanding, to know God more deeply, and to grasp the power of love, the need for humility, and the importance of righteousness. The reflective reader will be led to self-examination by Christ's virtues, by both love and the righteousness of God, and by the power of God as well as the anger of God, because an example has been set before her, a man lifted up upon a cross, who willingly gave his innocent life that she might be spared.

Aquinas' soteriological development illustrates Ellen Charry's suspicion (2012:229):

> that western theology has a narrow and fragile doctrine of terrestrial happiness as relief from fear of eternal punishment through faith in the forgiveness of sin. This is a pathology-driven psychology based on God's displeasure with humanity. Inattention to the full range of divine emotion has restricted happiness

[60] I have chosen to indicate Ellen Charry's thought on Aquinas instead of Lombard and Anselm, whom Charry also engages with from the medieval period. There are three reasons for this choice, (a) Aquinas serves as example for the increasing divide between knowledge and wisdom, which (b) lead to the decrease of a therapeutic understanding of happiness, and (c) Ellen Charry engages with Aquinas in the sequel to *By the renewing of your minds* (1997a), namely, *God and the art of happiness*, where a terrestrial understanding of happiness is re-established (Charry, 2010:109).

> to escaping deserved punishment. Acknowledging God's full-bodied emotional life will enable theology to appreciate God's enjoyment of human flourishing for God's own happiness and to argue that, theologically speaking, happiness is the mutual enjoyment of God and humanity when each fulfils the other.

A transition is made by Ellen Charry from salutary knowledge to talk of happiness by asserting the purpose of her book in *By the renewing of your minds* (1997a): "I argue that classical doctrinal theology is pastorally motivated and that its end is human flourishing … all the thinkers to be examined here held that knowing and loving God is the mechanism of choice for forming excellent character and promoting genuine happiness" (2010:ix). When Charry reclaims happiness from secular captivity, she depends upon Athanasius, Augustine and Aquinas, who were concerned both with knowledge and its salutary effect. By emphasising salutarity, Ellen Charry bridges the gap between knowledge and happiness. Knowledge as mechanism of choice for forming an excellent life underscores the notion of *asherism*, which understands happiness to be a way of life.

3.5 Christianity's offering of happiness

Ellen Charry centres her discussion of happiness on the "gap between eschatological happiness and temporal happiness", which "needs to be addressed because people experience hardship and grief that sets them off balance, and they wonder whether they can ever be happy again in this life, or whether life amounts to no more than a vale of tears simply to be slogged through somehow in hopes of a heavenly reward" (2010:ix). *God and the art of happiness* (2010), the sequel to *By the renewing of your minds* (1997a) describes a salutary reading as normative framework from which one may begin to think of happiness. Happiness, describes Charry (2010:x):

> [is] a realizing eschatology with salvation centred in sanctification. Salvation is growing into the wisdom of divine love and enjoying oneself in the process. I address the concern for academic theology by asking how the doctrines shape a way of life that forms people for living their lives excellently.

In the article "On happiness", she describes the reciprocal nature of the enjoyment of God that underscores happiness (Charry, 2004b:19):

> The purpose of knowing God better is to love "him" and that loving "him" we may enjoy him. Further, that enjoying him we may dwell in him and that in dwelling in him that we may glorify and be glorified in him and that being glorified in him we may be happy, or, at least enjoy all the days of our life. To put the point sharply, a God-centred life is joyous and happily productive. It blesses not only individuals, but also society, and one's contribution to society by means of a God-centred life enhances personal satisfaction.

The disposition of personal satisfaction, as synonym for happiness, has a scriptural and doctrinal point of departure. The former, satisfaction, in the words "*makarios*" and "*ašrê*" found in the New and Old Testament and the latter, happiness, in Augustine's *The Happy Life* as well as Aquinas' *Treatise on Happiness*. Ellen Charry engages in both traditions to indicate that God wills the flourishing of humanity (2011a:34). In both accounts, the nature of happiness "is the experience not of a transient pleasant emotions but rather of sustained flourishing as a result of living wisely and being carefully guided by reverence for God" (Charry, 2011c:347). In light of a doctrine of happiness, Charry understands the scriptural witness of happiness through salvation as the act of "maturing in the wisdom of divine love" (2010:x-xi).

As a final indication of Ellen Charry's motivation for "reopening" the discussion of happiness, she writes in the introduction to *God and the art of happiness* (2010:xii):

> Some readers may ask why I wish to retrieve the Christian doctrine of happiness now. With affection for pieties and theologies espousing self-denial, the redemptiveness of suffering and a towering fear of hell are out of favour: Christianity is in an upbeat mood, and Christians reassure one another that God loves and encourages them in their struggles.

One of the aims, Ellen Charry (2010:xii) indicates:

> (is) to reclaim Christianity's offering of happiness from secular captivity. Untethered from God, there is little call to locate happiness in a spiritual-moral framework. Christian doctrine has not adequately linked piety to pleasure, thus leaving a theological gap between goodness and happiness. Happiness unlinked from goodness and linked to excitement has moved in to fill the space. My hope in reopening the theological discussion is to reconnect pleasure to goodness so that happiness may regain its soteriological calling, not only for Christian who may have ceded the term to the marketplace but also for those who seek spiritual flourishing.

Charry finds in Augustine and Aquinas a move in the right direction, the understanding that knowledge of God is salvific in nature. Augustine and Aquinas consequently have an important contribution to make when thinking of happiness soteriologically. On the one hand, Augustine and Aquinas assimilated theology with the reigning philosophical schools[61] of the day; while on the other hand, they retained a distinctively theological accent in consideration of happiness. This re-articulation is important for Ellen Charry, as it continues from her logic that only through truly knowing God can we come to enjoy God's presence and so be happy. She derives this logic from the notion of *asherism*, a form of living in the presence of our knowledge of God, which is salutary by nature. The particular emphasis of Augustine and Aquinas[62] are noteworthy for Charry's argument.

One may begin with Augustinian therapeutic soteriology introduced by Ellen Charry (2010:157):

> His dogmatic examination of the scriptural foundation for the doctrine of God leads to a search for the image of God in us by means of which we discover who we are in God, that is, *who we are*. To know God is to know ourselves, and understanding ourselves theocentrically in terms of Genesis 1.26 is true self-knowledge for true self-love.

Sin is accordingly described in terms of disordered love, which must be healed through true self-love: "Although Augustine often names sin as pride, he means simply badly misshaped self-love. This is not evil, but the misoriented good of love which God created us" (Charry, 2010:157).

A rich heritage is found in Aquinas, who "drew on Augustine, Boethius and Aristotle in fashioning a rich foundation for Christian happiness. To understand Thomas we must first discard the idea that happiness is a feeling of moderate euphoria" (Charry, 2007:31) and "we must be willing to consider that happiness is linked intrinsically to virtue[63] (doing good well)" (Charry, 2007:31). The premises from which Aquinas considered happiness are as follows (Charry, 2007:31):

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[61] "The Western Philosophical Heritage" is the title Ellen Charry uses for her chapter on "classical moral philosophy", which served as conversation partners for Christian conceptualisation of happiness. She describes: "In contrast to happiness as sustained external pleasure, the ancients agreed that happiness is enjoying oneself in living morally and productively, and it is an external judgment on how one is faring at life" (Charry, 2010:3-4). It is from such an understanding that Augustine and Aquinas drew their appropriations for theology.

[62] In the article "The necessity of divine happiness", Charry recalls the contribution that Aquinas has to make: "Classical metaphysics is perhaps best represented in Christian theology by Thomas Aquinas" (2012a:239).

[63] Ellen Charry describes the context of Aquinas as follows: "Aquinas received Aristotle as fresh Latin translations of Aristotle's Greek text became available. It is not surprising that, in a philosophically sophisticated environment, happiness was of general interest, since it was such a prominent theme in ancient philosophy…The translation of the complete text of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* (NE) in the mid-thirteenth century intensified

> 1) God is good. 2) The cosmos is God's creation. As such, it is an expression of his goodness. 3) The creation is unified because each part belongs to and contributes to the whole and is in turn promoted, sustained and perfected by the rest. All things actualize the goodness of God and celebrate themselves as good creatures when they are at their best and helping all creation to flourish.

Aquinas furthers Augustine's argument by indicating how "being healed of bad love requires deconstructing bad knowledge" so that "better knowledge of love" may be found (Charry, 2010:158). Ellen Charry illustrates this point (2010:158):

> Augustine tells us that being healed of bad love requires deconstructing bad knowledge, but he does not tell us how to break through bad habits of love that are built on bad knowledge. He tells us where to look to find better knowledge of love- that is where to find wisdom and goodness- but he does not explain how that actually happens.

For Charry, Aquinas represents an amalgamation between Augustinian and Aristotelian conception of happiness, bringing into conversation an eschatological and physical understanding of happiness. She writes (Charry, 2010:88):

> *Nicomachean Ethics* ensconced in a discussion of happiness is the highest good of life that guides our moral efforts. Goodness is the only way to true happiness. Putting happiness at the head of *Nicomachean Ethics* signals the practicality of philosophy on which all the ancients agreed. Aristotle's interest is not in theorizing about the good life but in helping us live it. This means becoming excellent persons through the cultivation of virtue.

The fact that the "highest good is valuable in itself and is desired for its own sake, not as means to some further good" (Charry, 2010:88) is noteworthy, as it parallels scriptural affirmation that "happiness is a way of life" (Charry, 2010:89). Ellen Charry continues to highlight important moments in Aristotle's thought that influenced Aquinas' thinking (2010:89):

> Aristotle makes a significant methodological move. To distinguish his position from Plato's, he says that he will work inductively, beginning with what is knowable to us from experience, as opposed to working from first principles, as did Plato … Aristotle leaves an opening for the Christian teaching that happiness is found in God when, in the opening book of the NE, he muses that happiness may be a gift of the gods…The path to happiness is unflinchingly social, not private, because it takes place in the context of interpersonal and public relationships and behaviours.

At this point in the discussion, Ellen Charry develops a similarity between Aristotle and Augustine: "Augustine's eschatology is also deeply social. Heaven, after all, is a city. True happiness is in a harmonious community where peace pervades all relationships" (2010:89). Charry understands Aristotle's conception of happiness to be progressive by nature. She explains (Charry, 2010:89):

> Happiness is being an excellent person, and that is demanding: learning to "do" one's life excellently takes time. Aristotle's theory implies that we become happier as we become better able to handle a wide range of experiences, settings, and relationships. It requires using ourselves well. Learning to live happily (morally) is not an exact science that can be calculated, but an art to be cultivated.

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interest in the subject because the first and last books are on happiness, suggesting that the moral life and happiness are inseparable" (2010:86). In her contribution to *The Dictionary of Scripture and ethics*, Charry indicates how "Aristotle's Nichomachean Ethics sets the virtuous life in the context of happiness" (2011c:348).

Up to this point in the argument, Augustine and Aquinas concur with Aristotle's conception of happiness. Augustine and Aquinas depart with Aristotle, however, in Aristotle's conception of happiness as self-sufficient and complete within itself. Charry argues (2010:90-91):

> because for them complete happiness is possible only after this life, when physical distractions are gone and we can know God and love God intellectually, perfectly, and uninterruptedly. Based on the tradition gathered from Augustine and Aristotle, Aquinas turns his attention to knowing God, and, though he does not always call it happiness, life's goal is to know God perfectly. Perfect knowledge is the eschatological intellectual activity of the blessed in heaven, though inklings of it are possible in this life. It is possible only by divine grace and can be called supernatural happiness. Knowledge from the unaided or natural mind is possible, but it is limited to sensory knowledge for the most part. Perfect knowledge of God is perfect happiness for Aquinas.

Echoes of Augustine's theology are to be found in Aquinas, Ellen Charry recalls (2010:109):

> Following Augustine, Aquinas believed that happiness is enjoying God, but he articulated it primarily as knowing or seeing God. Happiness is possible in this life in a limited but significant way, for it requires God to illuminate the human mind by uniting it to his own.

Aquinas makes two contributions to the conversation of happiness: "First, he integrated Augustine's notion of happiness residing in the enjoyment of God with divine illumination, the beatific vision, and immortal life" (Charry, 2010:109). The second lies in Aquinas' recognition "that terrestrial happiness prepares one for eternal bliss" (Charry, 2010:109). Aquinas consequently "valued mundane happiness because he saw continuity between temporal and eternal bliss: temporal happiness is a foretaste of the heavenly banquet, and enables us to anticipate and yearn for eschatological fulfilment even more" (Charry, 2010:109).

Ellen Charry's presupposition that happiness is "realizing eschatology with salvation centred in sanctification" (2010:ix) resonates with her assessment of Aquinas. "Thomas's painstaking detail in working through Christian belief is the tapestry of a realizing eschatology" (Charry, 2010:110). In her final analysis, Charry describes "the Christian teaching on happiness" as reaching "its zenith"[64] (2010:111) in Aquinas. The doctrine of secondary agency[65] enables Aquinas "to explain human activity while holding to a high doctrine of divine sovereignty" (Charry, 2010:159).

Aquinas' conceptualisation of the intellect as an extension and instrument of God's intellect implies that providence proceeds from "a person who plans, envisions, and executes action" (Charry, 2010:159-160). In accordance, "God delegates specific creativity in obedience to human abilities. Creativity honours and expresses human dignity and nobility … In using ourselves wisely and creatively, we advance creation, and that cannot but please the Creator" (Charry, 2010:159-160).

Ellen Charry describes herself as taking Aquinas' argument a bit further (2010:160):

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[64] Ellen Charry describes how happiness in the Modern period distanced itself from Aquinas' realising eschatology: "Protestants were wary of Aristotle and scholasticism – and therefore of Aquinas. Happiness was of little interest to them. While Aquinas thought from creation, Protestants thought from the fall. Starting with Martin Luther's search for a gracious God, Protestants became preoccupied with finding a solution to the paralyzing fear produced by their belief in God's justifiable wrath about human sinfulness. Although Protestants did not talk much about happiness, it implicitly became relief from anxiety before God. Having rejected the penitential system, Protestants turned to Christology in a search of absolution" (2010:111).

[65] Charry quotes Aquinas in seeking to define secondary agency: "The first cause of all things…is compared to the whole of nature as nature is to art. Hence that which first underlies the whole of nature is from the first cause of all things, and the function of second causes is to make it suitable for singular things" (2010:160).

> since God is goodness itself, and creation exemplifies that goodness, God enjoys his own goodness when we comply with the power delegated to us in this creative way. Using ourselves artfully advances not only creation itself, but also God's enjoyment of us and our enjoyment of ourselves. Godly self-employment both enhances our lives and pleases God, who always enjoys our flourishing.

She holds: "Happiness … is a state of the soul that can be cultivated through a certain way of knowing. It depends upon knowing, because knowing shapes the soul..." (Charry, 2004b:26). There are two forms of knowing indicated by Charry; "how we know" and "what we know" (2004b:26). Charry explains (2004b:26):

> The knowledge we assimilate shapes us depending upon the effect what we come to understand deeply has on us. We become attached to what we know well … We can become both what we love and what we hate. The emotional power things have over us shapes our souls … All this suggests that happiness requires discerning what is good to know well from what is bad to know well. Growing into a happy life requires prioritizing what is to get more, and what less, of our attention.

The turn toward a doctrine of happiness, as one where our knowledge of God shapes our being, is pre-empted in Ellen Charry's statement (2004b:26):

> The philosophical and spiritual traditions often suggest that we need a teacher to lead the way…The ability to be spiritually nourished is itself a gift: one cannot impose it on oneself or on another. The argument here is that the beauty, wisdom, and goodness of God provide us with a pattern of meaning for our lives that bends the soul toward happiness by leading us in the care and nurture of human dignity.

A definition is given of happiness in light of the aforementioned: "Perhaps now we are ready for a theological notion of happiness or flourishing-enjoyment of and satisfaction with life through participation in the properties we understand to characterize God that become us" (Charry, 2004b:26-27).

The means through which happiness may be cultivated begins and ends for Ellen Charry with the "interpretations of Scripture and doctrine", which "promote spiritual" and "social flourishing" (2002a:177). Scripture serves as foundation for character formation through its revelation of God. A reciprocal process takes place, whereby the reader is transformed by acquiring knowledge of God which evokes happiness resulting in God's enjoyment of humanity. Charry describes how God reaches out to humanity through Scripture (2002a:176):

> As God draws us to himself with motherly care, we may participate in God's wisdom and love, gaining strength and skills from our intimacy with him. Thus, strengthened by our life in God, we may grow in personal self-mastery to enjoy serving God and neighbour…The means to happiness is the truth of God that is to goodness, beauty, and wisdom. This is to say that God is the psychological and moral foundation, not only of personal fulfilment, but also of just societies.

Ellen Charry pre-empts the possible criticism of self-love in a happy life centred in Christ by providing a "rehabilitation of self-love" as "positive theological category" (2010:161). She finds that (Charry, 2010:161):

> Butler's self-love resonates with Aquinas's work on secondary agency as obedience: in both cases, living a godly life is obedience to one's nature. The call to spiritual thriving is a priori: we are defined to it, so to speak. God has outfitted us for happiness by being ourselves in the proper theological sense of the term. In Aquinas's case, it is to be an instrument of divine providence in creative activity: in Butler's case, it is pursuing the moral life as self-love.

Self-love, "is not only faithfulness to our nature, but it actually enriches us, so that we become happier as we become more adept at being our proper theological selves, that is, as salvation and sanctification realise themselves in us" (Charry, 2010:161).

The a priori conditions relied on by Aquinas and Butler make happiness possible (Charry, 2010:162). Ellen Charry argues (2010:162):

> these conditions mean that all persons are blessed by God to enjoy themselves and their life in him. Believers learn this through the ministrations of the church that orient people toward their proper identity. When believers properly grasp that identity, they should want to become in practice who they are in God by definition. Happiness is a universal possibility for both Aquinas and Butler.

Charry has voiced through Augustine and Aquinas how knowledge of God shapes the human character. Scripture and doctrine are the means by which God communicates this knowledge to humankind. As Christians are assimilated to knowledge of God, a happy disposition occurs as result.

Ellen Charry describes the formative potential exerted by knowledge of God on the lives of individuals as *asherism. Asherism* depicts a satisfaction with life, where the "properties" participated in are understood to characterise God (Charry, 2004b: 26-27). The nuanced way of speaking about both knowledge of God and the transformation of character present in Aquinas was lost with modernity. Charry takes issue with this loss, as it separated talk of piety and pleasure from happiness.

3.6 Asherism: goodness and pleasure

An integrated understanding of happiness, formulated by Aquinas who "guarded intimacy between goodness and truth" was "rent asunder" explains Ellen Charry with modernity (2011a:239). She remarks that (Charry, 2011a:239):

> Truth and goodness, fact and value were severed from one another and Christians had to locate themselves in this new epistemological arena. Happiness, now interpreted hedonistically as pleasure was ripped from its moral moorings and set loose for "the pursuit of happiness" detached from God and goodness. Christians found themselves having to opt for either goodness or pleasure, as it seemed the two no longer dwelt in the same abode".

Ellen Charry finds a foundation for happiness in Scripture that does not necessitate a divide between goodness and pleasure, namely *asherism*. The argument for *asherism* is two-pronged (Charry, 2011:239):

> First, theology does not have to choose between temporal and eschatological happiness[66] … Second, theology does not have to disparage commercial invitations to pleasure in order to articulate a robust theological teaching, because a theological teaching, while sensitive to the importance of material well-being, is not define by it. It recognizes the moral as well as the material place of flourishing.

Asherism consequently provides a substantial doctrine of happiness as "realizing eschatology of growth into the beauty and wisdom of God" (Charry, 2010:157). Charry illustrates that: "Happiness is enjoying life through a divinely initiated pattern of spiritual growth" (2010:157). The pattern of spiritual growth is illustrated by relating to God's covenant with Israel. Asherist commands are commands that "conduce to a successful and pleasurable life" (Charry, 2011:244) and Charry (2010:182):

[66] Ellen Charry delineates her thought: "It is possible to construct a modest theological doctrine of temporal happiness knowing that death awaits each of us and that we will lose whatever happiness we have in this life on the principle that to have and to lose is preferable to not having at all" (2011a:239).

> proposes that happiness is enjoying life through the way of life to which Israel is called. It begins with the covenant between God and Israel…The argument is that happiness is enjoying God, creation, and self by cultivating the wisdom behind divine commands that enable one to become an instrument of the world's flourishing.[67]

The Pentateuch is read in light of the covenant, which brings a social dimension to human flourishing (Charry, 2010:193):

> The covenant grounds the biblical doctrine of happiness. Israel's responsibility to live the divinely authorized way of life shaped by the divine commands that construct and maintain society. They structure personal and family life in terms of Israel's corporate well-being, from which all benefit. Reverent obedience to God promotes self-mastery, values, and skills that promote personal well-being and the common good…The Decalogue, the Holiness Code, the ensuing Deuteronomic legislation – and even morally perplexing precepts – structure an asherist way of life in which God and Israel enjoy one another, as Israel lives into and rejoices in its covenantal responsibilities.

Ellen Charry draws a parallel to happiness (2010:193-194):

> From these texts it is reasonable to conclude that the Pentateuch understands Israel's thriving as its happiness: happiness is enjoying and celebrating a productive and fulfilling life in obedience to the terms of the covenant with God to which Israel agreed at Sinai. Socializing legislation discloses values and virtues that are to be understood dynamically and applied liberally in situations.

In contrast to the Pentateuch, whose focus was on obedience to the commands themselves, the Psalter refers to such commands universally (Charry, 2010:214):

> Divine precepts and ordinances have coalesced into a salutary way of life that is summarized as reverence, keeping the commandments, taking refuge in the Lord, being humble, walking in his way, and so on. Specific practices have been generalized so that revering the Lord is a high-minded life of integrity, justice, generosity, and honesty that encourages others along the same path to a rich and enjoyable life. This is the life for which the law has destined Israel, from oppression but had international moral leadership as its ultimate goal.

Ellen Charry elaborates the asherist reading of the Psalter: "The Psalter expects energetic fidelity to covenantal precepts. Corporate election calls for enthusiastic corporate response. In this, numerous psalms follow the pattern set by the Pentateuchal passages", which is used as examples in her exposition. "They testify that Israel's flourishing – or, perhaps better, salvation – lies in learning to live uprightly by carrying out God's ordinances and applying the values and skills learned from specific practices across life" (Charry, 2010:197). This "fidelity to God's way is all that one needs to succeed in life, for success is measured in more than money (Charry, 2010:215). "Finally, there is a strong sense in which happiness is a judgment on the quality of one's life as it proceeds and when it is evaluated at its end" (Charry, 2010:215).

In Charry's reading of Proverbs, two themes come to the fore; the personification of lady wisdom, where Charry argues that (2010:228):

> objecting to wisdom ethics because it is boring or simplistic misses the point that constructing and maintaining healthy societies is not simply a political art. Civilizations only flourish as the spiritual

[67] Charry relates this asherist dimension to happiness: "Happiness is a discipline that might be called *godly self-enjoyment"* (2010:182).

> strengths that the sages cherish captures the imagination of the people. For Scripture, enjoying advancing in this strength is the happy life.

The second theme is a therapeutic understanding of *asherism* reminiscent in Augustine's therapeutic soteriology. "The skeptical might object that the promise of a happy life held out by the wisdom ethic of Proverbs is naïve. Happiness is a fragile gossamer fabric … Yet the skeptics are a breath of fresh air in a room of unrelenting trust in goodness," (Charry, 2010:228). Ellen Charry alludes to the presence of suffering in life (2010:228):

> Life is not fair, and the just can seem abandoned. The question for the skeptic is whether, in the dark night of the soul, happiness as Scripture understands it can be eradicated or whether the comfort and enjoyment of a reverent life is a tool for fighting tragedy and rebounding from it.[68]

Whereas Ellen Charry reads *asherism* in the Old Testament as enjoyment of the self, neighbour and creation coupled with the celebration of the ability to contribute to the "flourishing of creation" (2010:229), she turns to the New Testament to uncover how the Gospel of John imagines happiness.

A parallel exists between the Old Testament's emphasis on knowing God through obedience and knowing God in the New Testament through obedience to Christ. Ellen Charry acknowledge the "glaring discontinuities between the Old and New Testament" (2010:241), but finds the asherist potential in the possibility of enjoying a happy life through Christ" (2010:241). She states (Charry, 2010:241):

> The Fourth Gospel's talk of becoming a child of God, being born or reborn of God, being illumines or living as a child of light, having eternal life, and being one with God by keeping the commandments of Christ are analogues of the Tanaḥ's reference to keeping the commandments, taking refuge in the Lord, living in God's house, and revering the Lord.

Ellen Charry indicates how in the New Testament, reverence, worship and happiness occur when believers are united with God through obedience to Christ (2010:241):

> Here, in John, we love God by loving Jesus, and we abide in his teaching, which is participation in Jesus' unity with the Father. These images recall and intensify the asherist vision of reverence in the Older Testament materials we have examined, but with an excitement missing in the older settled texts … Abiding by divine commands is the wisdom of God for the Tanaḥ: in John's Gospel it becomes loving intimacy with God. Eternal life with God is to abide in Jesus' wise guidance.

Jesus sets the ultimate example of obedience in obeying God unto death. "Loving Jesus" consequently "means keeping his word and commandments just as he keeps those of his Father. This is the way to eternal life"[69] (Charry, 2010:246). Ellen Charry continues (2010:249-250):

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[68] Ellen Charry uses a similar logic in her contribution "On things we can't fix", where she discusses the question of theodicy. The first remark indicates the human disposition toward suffering, "the assumption that we should be able to write our own scripts and act them out flawlessly". Hereafter, Charry seeks to show that human dignity resides in the moral sphere where physical damage cannot "take away" from the worth of humans. When speaking of someone who suffers, she asks: "Or, should we say that since her virtue and honour are intact, that she has not suffered damage in the place where her proper dignity and worth resides? Here suffering is understood not in physical but in moral terms. Happiness is correctly judged by the state of our souls, not our bodies, much as we want them to be perfect." A final remark pertains to the opportunity presented in suffering to grow into the situation, when speaking of people who suffer: "They set themselves then to growing into the situation, to finding spiritual gifts within the reality they actually inhabit, as a way of escaping from the hell of constant, debilitating anguish that things are not right and cannot be made right. In addition, when they did, each found a way forward …" (Charry, 2000b:159).

> Eternal life occupies the place of *ashrey, smḥ,* and reverence for the Lord that is dominant in the texts from the Older Testament … It is sadly ironic that John's message – that eternal life is love – that binds the Father, Jesus, and disciples together into one body, was formed in the crucible of rancour and malice…the eternal life that Jesus was sent to deliver is the love of God, the knowledge that love locates God in us, us in God, and us in one another as members of Christ's body. Love is the dynamic power that reaches down in Jesus and carries us into the love he shares with his Father, out into the community that is formed by this love, and back up into the beauty of the Father, who is responsible for saving happiness. The wisdom of divine love is eternal life.

Charry makes two important statements regarding the role of grace in forming our knowledge; the first, how grace and the law are not in opposition to one another, but rather a fulfilment of the promise of Christ's reign: "It is a mistake to oppose law and grace, for God's grace makes way for a radically transformed social and moral order. The law of Christ enables a new way of life that is obedient to God" (2003a:34). Secondly, grace centres our practices in Christ, "both Pauline and Matthean interpretations of faith in Jesus Christ elucidate a new and demanding vision of religious practice that applies divine grace given through Christ" (Charry, 2003a:38). Moreover, notes Ellen Charry (2003a:238):

> [the] cross and resurrection, not the Decalogue, are front and centre for Paul. They reformulate godliness and regulate the practice of a pure life. They are the grace of God for the reconciliation and true empowerment of Jews and Gentiles as one people … Purity lies in the spiritual strength to live as Christ died: testifying to the power and strength of letting go that others may live. Christ embodied the wisdom of God that now belongs to those who belong to Christ. One should not worry about how one makes one's way into the body of Christ…

Augustine's belief "that all humans are broken by disordered love[70] and that their spiritual search is for healing" (Charry, 2010:251), coupled with the actualisation thereof in biblical material forms the foundation for her doctrine of happiness. The cognitive-behavioural approach to actualising one's healing is indicated, in Ellen Charry's opinion, by the canonical ordering of the Scripture. "Behavioural skills enable personal dynamics to assume a different place in our arsenal of skills. Theologically put, obeying divine commands enables us to experience the reverent life as pleasing and rewarding[71]. We do better by practicing than by being talked into it" (Charry, 2010:252-253). The sacraments serve as forum in which "the slow and arduous process" of centring oneself in God through participation takes place (Charry, 2001:127). Charry affirms (2001:127):

> Christian therapy is emancipation from the distortions of the self to which all persons are liable. It begins with realizing that the source of one's proper dignity and nobility is God and no one or nothing else. Dignity and nobility are found in coming to understand God and in coming to see oneself as an echo of the Trinity.

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[69] Ellen Charry devotes a chapter to illustrate how eternal life is inaugurated by Christ, "John 14 charts Jesus" leading into eternal life as follows: (I) "Believe in God… (2) Accept Jesus" claims about himself at face value… (3) Abide in Jesus" word of loving intimacy… (4) Imitate Jesus… (5) Love Jesus by obeying him…(6) The process is to carry believers to the Father…" (2010:247).

[70] Ellen Charry states that this disordered love can affect harm on the self as well as others. Of importance is where dignity, or as Charry puts it, the image of God is located: "Clinging to the part of us that cannot be damaged by others because they have no access to it is the theological ground on which the healing of love can occur. This is the place in us that can rest in God, and it is a refuge in times of trouble" (2010:252).

[71] The quote rings true to Ellen Charry's conception of sapience as a practical form of knowing. Charry explains when reading Augustine's understanding of various forms of knowing: "Sapientia is the response of loving God once the mind is able to remember and understand and love him by whom it was made … In this way it will be wise not with its own light but by sharing in that supreme light, and it will reign in happiness where it reigns eternal. Sapientia is practical because it turns the believer outward" (1993b:94).

Through the sacraments, also called "symbolic rituals," people are formed "in the virtues needed for healthy functioning and, where persons are the object of the action, lay moral claims on their lives. They edify and formally bring people to a society and, in the case of some Christian rites, to God"[72] (Charry, 2008:86). "To this end, rituals teach and reinforce virtues, values, and standards needed by individuals for the well-being of the society" (Charry, 2008:86). The sacraments underscore important dimensions of therapeutic soteriology, "the community's sacraments graft people into the life of God, uniting them with the saving work of Christ and making them living members of it" and "some Christian liturgical rites can restore" "ones relationship to the saving work of God in Christ" (Charry, 2008:91).

The opportunity is presented by Ellen Charry to construct a "therapeutic foundation from which to help people build strength and well-being[73]" (2011b:291); "it suggests that maturation in spiritual and practical wisdom is a realistic hope because God's love and trust abides in the deep recesses of one's soul". Expressing the recovery model spelled out in *The Trinity*, Augustine put it this way (Augustine in Charry, 2011b:291):

> people become children of God to the extent that they begin to exist in the newness of the Spirit and begin to be renewed in the interior human being according to the image of him who created them. All the old weakness is not done away with from the moment of one's baptism. Rather, the renewal begins with the forgiveness of all sins and is realized to the extent that one who is wise is wise about spiritual things.

In short, "the church's sacramental agency offers Christians an abiding in the Holy Trinity and the power of Christ and the Holy Spirit to heal and be healed" (Charry, 2010:256). Ellen Charry uses the example of baptism, which co-opts its participants in the salvific drama exemplified by Christ (2010:262-263):

> Having been co-opted into that drama at baptism, the believer is dressed in the vestments of salvation, the armour of God. Assimilating salvation into our personalities requires developing a new outlook on things and strategies for accomplishing them …

Ellen Charry continues with the train of thought when referring to Aquinas's "idea that one is an instrument of divine providence". Charry suggests (2010:262-263):

> By embracing that instrumentality joyfully, we enjoy ourselves in God. This is the happiness of abundant life. Those co-opted into the drama of redemption have no choice but to embrace their providential responsibility energetically, for they have become servants of the world's flourishing and of God's enjoyment of creation. Their happiness is in enjoying God and the world as servants. Enjoying eternal life is doing this excellently and energetically.

The point is similarly illustrated in the article "Sacramental ecclesiology" (2005:213):

> Baptism … inducts people into the redemption of Israel and the death and resurrection of Christ, setting them in the church as the foundation of the Christian life. These ceremonies define and identify them like any swearing ceremony. Baptismal rites sanctify in this objective sense. They do not confirm previously cultivated piety, but call for it.

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[72] "Although they differ in performance, both civic and Christian rituals practices preserve and nourish the community performing them, the persons for or on whom they are performed, and the persons witnessing them" (Charry, 2008:86). It is interesting to see that Ellen Charry does not engage with the language of "performance" which makes this article the first.

[73] In the book *God and the art of happiness,* Ellen Charry describes this process in terms of the gospel of John's Christology in speaking about the increased need for healing, through and of love (2010:255).

"The church" consequently "equips those who wish to be healed unto eternal life through public initiatory rights. Christian initiation imposes an identity not of one's choosing. Like being *ashrey,* we must grow into this identity, since, as Paul put it, Christians have the Holy Spirit in them" (Charry, 2010:264).

The initiatory process invokes an intimate form of knowing God, she argues (Charry, 2002c:114):

> Knowing the story of God's dealings with us in creation, we are given spiritual knowledge of the wisdom, the goodness, the truth, and the moral beauty that is the very being, the *ousia* of God. By knowing and loving the beauty and goodness of our God, and by yearning to know God more fully, our desires are already oriented in a godly and noble manner. We may come to taste, to touch, to dwell in the wisdom of God, which is the patrimony of our baptism.

Ellen Charry indicates why the "initiatory rights are therapeutic" (2010:266). Because, "through them God equips people with spiritual power tools to become the 'new Creation,' which they have been made by the Trinitarian work of creation, healing, and empowerment, not by their own strength" (Charry, 2010:266). "In asherist terms, these people are healing through incorporation into Christ's life, death, resurrection, and ascension…" (Charry, 2010:266).

In addition to being healed, three moments occur where the identity of the participant is transformed. Charry indicates (1995:1077):

> First, this sacred washing purifies the baptized for a new life dominated by belonging to God … Second, the baptized are always in the presence of God and carry the seal of the Holy Spirit around with them. They are ennobled and dignified by the presence of God, and live as signs of God's self-communication through Jesus … Third, the baptized are empowered. No matter what direction they turn, the dignity of God impels them to be agents of reconciliation and empowers them for self-control.

Ellen Charry brings the concepts of healing as empowerment and strengthening of love in conversation with *asherism.* She shows (Charry, 2010:268):

> Asherism's realizing eschatology functions in two directions, suggesting that healing is healing: that is, being healed by Christ strengthens one's ability to heal others. At the same time, healing others is therapeutic, because it is empowering and it is empowered by and for the beauty of holiness that is obedience to God … Being led by the disclosure of God in Christ and empowered by the spiritual gifts given in initiation offer the healing of the broken image in us that Augustine worked so hard to draw us into, for healing and empowering love water the soul.

Ellen Charry understands realising eschatology as a continuous disposition before God where Christians participate in God's will for creation while enjoying life through obedience to God's commandments.

It is affirmed by Ellen Charry that grace and God's commandments are not in opposition to one another instead, it enables one to live life excellently. Grace accordingly situates obedience to God's commandments in Christ. Furthermore, sacraments teach and reinforce the standard set by God's commandments. Through the sacraments, a way of living life excellently is enacted through symbol and ritual, underscoring the role of grace in bringing human persons into relation with God.

3.7 Conclusion:

Knowledge of God and happiness are two themes that run parallel to Ellen Charry's construction of flourishing, a disposition where happiness is evoked through an established habit of mind.

Charry traces the discrepancy in theology's response to the Enlightenment, where there was distinguished between knowledge of God and truth and its consequent goodness. The discrepancy leads her to rethink the contribution theology has to make to the notion of happiness. When knowledge of God is understood to be the source of happiness, the knowledge itself must be deconstructed. Ellen Charry does exactly this by indicating the formative potential of truth in the knower which leads to a form of living that is simultaneously directed toward God and creation. Life that is lived excellently marks enjoyment of God (as humans participate in God's goodness by being assimilated to God through knowledge) and creation. The mutual enjoyment of God and creation evokes a disposition of flourishing characterised as happiness.

The emphasis does not only fall on the experience of happiness, but also on the notion that God enjoys Godself when creation flourishes. Happiness becomes a disposition for Ellen Charry that functions irrespective of human suffering, as happiness is a state of being premised on a particular knowledge of God. Ellen Charry argues (2006a:145):

> knowledge is true if it leads us into goodness, making us happy and good. The idea that knowing good things make us good implies continuity between the knower and what she knows. It is not simply to be cognizant of the truth but to be assimilated into it.

Charry circumvents the divide between terrestrial and eschatological happiness by establishing the notion of realising eschatology. The understanding that happiness is premised on enjoyment of God through obedience to God's commandments in light of a soteriology centred in sanctification (Charry, 2010:x). Ellen Charry is led to argue for a realising eschatology in her understanding that happiness, "is the experience not of a transient pleasant emotions but rather of sustained flourishing as a result of living wisely and being carefully guided by reverence for God" (2011c:37).

Actualisation of happiness occurs for Ellen Charry in two stages; firstly, Christians are to partake in the enjoyment of God by assuming a Christian identity premised on a therapeutic soteriology, and secondly, Christians are to assimilate to happiness by participating in God's plan for human flourishing. This occurs through a disposition of being ašrê, a life filled with obedience to God and preoccupation with the flourishing of creation.

Finally, the sacraments in particular baptism, co-opt Christians into a realised eschatology. This final stage may be likened to Ellen Charry's second-order assertions, where happiness becomes a regulative norm for the Christian community. By partaking in the sacraments Christians confess that terrestrial happiness is finite but substantial, as way of subscribing to God's will for the flourishing of creation.

Happiness for Ellen Charry is independent of momentary euphoric experiences. Instead, to be ashrey is a continuous disposition coram deo where Christians are reminded of their participation in God's will for creation to flourish while participating in the joys of life.

Chapter 4
Virtuous? Jennifer Herdt on human flourishing

"Happiness is found not in achieving independence but in embracing our ultimate dependency…while our final good is not fully up to us, it is something that requires our active participation: it is not something that we simply passively undergo. If virtue is the perfection of my love for God, the end of enjoyment of God cannot be fully characterized apart from my virtuous activity, my loving response to God. We find happiness in the perfected activity of receiving and returning God's gifts."

(Herdt, 2012b:57)

4.1 Introduction

If the question were to be posed to Jennifer Herdt's[74] literature, "in which ways does Jennifer Herdt contribute theologically to the themes of well-being and happiness?" one would possibly find her response in the suspicion of virtue present since the sixteenth century. Led by the "trajectory … in Augustinian anxiety over acquired virtue" (Herdt, 2012b:24), Herdt asks "in what sense virtuous action is at the same time performed for the sake of happiness and for the sake of the good aimed at by political science" (Herdt2012b:24).

Jennifer Herdt remarks on the distinctively Christian character of virtue understood theologically in the article "Hauerwas among the virtues"[75] (Herdt, 2012a: 215):

> Crucially, Christians cannot understand responsibility for character in the way that Aristotle does: virtue is not a matter of acquiring skills or excellences that allow us to flourish as instantiations of human nature, but a matter of becoming a follower of Jesus … We are to be made participants in God's story, not authors of our own.

This is in contrast to what Jennifer Herdt calls "the ironic secularization of religious thought" (2000:173), where the appeal to self-interest was used as means of escaping a common good premised on fear of the divine[76], coupled with an emphasis on human agency in moral formation.

There are three possible routes one may take when reading Jennifer Herdt's literature; the first would be a systematic investigation of the history of moral philosophy where themes of ethics and the Christian worldview may serve as platform upon which notions of happiness and flourishing may be constructed. This approach would be satisfactory in its articulation of a "religious reconstruction", where religion is seen "as 'a cultural system' that links 'worldview' and 'ethos' " (Herdt, 2000:169). Providing "an ultimate account of the way things are, and … simultaneously shapes our feelings and actions so that they conform to that description of reality" (Herdt, 2000:169).

The second possibility would be to look at soteriological themes that arose from appropriations of the Augustinian anxiety of virtues as splendid vices. Such an approach would grant the opportunity to distinguish between splendid vices and true virtue based on various theological contributions. It would

[74] Jennifer Herdt contributed to the 2010 God and Human Flourishing Consultation with her paper "Desire for the Common Good: A Defense of Eudaimonism" (Herdt, 2010).
[75]"This essay traces the evolution of Hauerwas's reflections on virtue and the virtues over the course of his career, with special attention to how this has been bound up with an increasingly emphatic theological particularism that has remained ambivalent between what I term "comprehensive" versus "exclusive" particularism" (Herdt, 2012a:202).
[76] This is often levelled at Luther's account of utter passivity in justification (Herdt, 2012b:179).

however, not allow for a comprehensive presentation of the development of conceptions of virtue in service of the greater good[77].

A third methodological approach which takes into consideration various streams of thought as they developed parallel to one another is most appropriate. Jennifer Herdt delineates the development of virtue premised on a theological understanding of happiness. The Augustinian legacy serves as point of departure for the reclamation of "virtue-talk" (Herdt, 2012a:205) where Herdt seeks to reclaim the possibility of habituation into virtue through a mimetic understanding of happiness (Herdt2012b:ix):

> This project took shape, than, as a particular way of narrating the story of virtue and of thereby beginning to recover and recast a Christian ethics of mimetic virtue freed from these distorting preoccupations.

It is my hope to set out Jennifer Herdt's contribution based on the greater framework of the good life as envisioned by various constituents where notions of virtue, salvation and the good life are woven together interchangeably. Jennifer Herdt begins her exposition of virtue with the secularisation of moral thought where virtue was divorced from its religious moorings.

4.2 The rise of secular morality

The development of moral thought is significant for understanding how various conceptions of happiness lead to divergent appropriations of virtuous living. Jennifer Herdt believes there to be no singular theme or criteria that may describe the "nature" of happiness, but that within moral thought various traditions of virtue were established based on various conceptions of the good life[78] (Herdt, 2004b:202) and of God. The latter is seen in her article "Divine compassion and the mystification of power: the latitudinarian divines in the secularization of moral thought"[79] where Benjamin Whichcote[80] (2010) reckons "all our happiness to consist in our enjoyment of him, our being and living in communion and acquaintance" with God (Whichcote in Herdt, 2001a: 259). Herdt understands this enjoyment to be made "possible when we partake through Christ in God's goodness and God's compassion" (2001a:259).

Benjamin Whichcote, reflecting the position of the Cambridge Platonists, makes an important link between morality and religion. Jennifer Herdt affirms of the Cambridge Platonists: "The Cambridge Platonists are well known for their view that morality is the heart of religion. When Whichcote declared that 'the sum of all religion is divine imitation' (Whichcote, 2010:284 in Herdt, 2001a: 259) he was pointing to the way in which goodness draws one to God, allows one to be caught up more fully in the life of God" (Whichcote in Herdt, 2001a:259). Morality consequently served "to bring

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[77] Jennifer Herdt does not qualify the use of the term "greater good" in her literature. One might instead seek to interpret "the greater good" within Herdt's priority toward praxis inherent in reflection. This is seen in the article "Christian humility, courtly civility, and the code of the streets", where Herdt reflects on courtly civility within the eighteenth-century and the critique thereof. She continues to pose this critique to the church and its interaction with the code of inner-Philadelphian streets. In her reflection, Herdt looks at particular church models and the relevant change that they could bring to the betterment of society.

[78]The history of moral philosophy serves as a shared "playing field" between philosophical and theological narratives that "is capable", for Jennifer Herdt, "of fruitful dialogue" (2004b:202).

[79] In this article, Jennifer Herdt tests the claim that "seventeenth-century theologians "domesticated" divine transcendence, with fostering an understanding of God that was clear and comprehensible, but unattractive, unpersuasive, and easily undermined by secular thought" (2001a:253).

[80]The *Encyclopaedia Britannica* describes Benjamin Whichcote as leader of the Cambridge Platonists, a "group of 17th-century English philosophic and religious thinkers who hoped to reconcile Christian ethics with Renaissance humanism, religion with the new science, and faith with rationality." Benjamin Whichcote expounded "in his sermons the Christian humanism that united the group" (The Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2013b). Jennifer Herdt references Whichcote's contribution as follows: "Benjamin Whichcote, *Select Sermons,* ed. Lord Shaftesbury (London: Awnsham and Churchhill, 1698)." (2001a:268).

humanity into deeper relation with God" (Herdt, 2001a:259). Herdt furthers the argument, stating (2001a:259):

> the natural world and human nature reveal God's goodness, but repentance and further grace are needed if we are to participate more fully in God's goodness and hence draw closer to God. The point of talking about compassion, whether human or divine, was therefore to bring humanity into deeper relation with God, not primarily to enhance human morality as such.

Morality, defined as a normative criterion from which societies exercise virtue (Herdt, 2004b:197-199), lends a clue to the way traditions function. Tradition has "a relationship to the past constantly constructed by the current generation" (Herdt, 2004b:197-199). The development of rationality, present in the Enlightenment, evoked a sense that tradition as something governed wholly by religious presuppositions was logically unsound (Herdt, 2001b:148). This is evidenced in "attempts to construct a morally acceptable religious ethic" which "continually threatened to render God superfluous to human morality and that no attempts to avoid this result were fully successful"[81] (Herdt, 2001b:148).

In addition to the rise of rationality, a problem arose in the exclusive dependence on God's grace for true virtuous living as it restricted divine action to Christian virtue, in the process eliminating any possibility of divine action in "natural virtues" (Herdt, 2012b:3). Herdt describes (2012b:3):

> What was lost was any sense that grace can work through ordinary processes of habituation, allowing a gradual transcendence of prideful self-love, a growing recognition of our true final end, a developing sense of the dependent of our virtue and moral agency. Even where some place remained for habituation or growth in charity, understood as a form of secondary causality or co-causation with divine agency, this had to be preceded by some moment of exclusively divine action on the passive human self.

The "exacerbated Augustinian worry" led to the thought that "false natural virtue might be more important for the conduct of public affairs" (Herdt, 2012b:3). Jennifer Herdt argues (2012b:3):

> What emerged in the course of these explorations into natural moral psychology were new forms of moral philosophy that were secular in the sense of setting aside any appeal to grace. Even when these secular forms of moral thought understood themselves to be reclaiming forms of pagan ethics, they continued to be shaped in problematic ways by the legacy of the splendid vices.

In Jennifer Herdt's article, "The invention of modern moral philosophy" (Herdt, 2001b), she delineates the argument further by referring to Schneewind[82] (Schneewind in Herdt, 2001b:148):

> The secularization of moral thought was a by-product of efforts to work out tensions internal to Christian moral thought. He shows in great detail that attempts to construct a morally acceptable religious ethics continually threatened to render God superfluous to human morality and that no attempts to avoid this result were fully successful.

Jennifer Herdt places the secularisation of moral thought squarely before the Christian tradition (2001b:148):

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[81] In this instance, Jennifer Herdt recaps Schneewind's argument in his book *The Invention of Autonomy* (1998), where he argues "that an impasse between modern natural law and perfectionist ethics revealed irresolvable tension within Christian ethics and thus encouraged the emergence of secular moral thought" (Schneewind, 1998 in Herdt, 2001b:147). Herdt argues contra to Schneewind's hypothesis by suggesting "that these tensions were specific to a voluntarist strand of Christian moral thought from which even antivoluntarists of the modern period were unable to break free" (Herdt, 2001b:147).

[82] Jennifer Herdt refers to the particular contribution of Schneewind in his book *The Invention of Autonomy* which she references as follows: "Schneewind, J.B. 1998. *The Invention of Autonomy: A History of Modern Moral Philosophy.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press." (2001b:173).

> Secularization was due not to the subversive efforts of religious skeptics, but to inconsistencies within Christian ethics that became unbearable within a socio-political context characterized by religious wars and the collapse of traditional religious authorities. The failure of modern moral thought to create a stable non-sectarian religious ethics, joined with the fear that sectarian forms of religious ethics could insert themselves into the public realm only at the risk of re-igniting religious wars, encouraged the conclusion, endorsed by Schneewind, that a public ethic must be fully secular.

Stanley Hauerwas is indicated by Jennifer Herdt as identifying a misplaced emphasis on the implication of virtue present within the secularisation of moral thought. Hauerwas consequently distinguished between agent and actions, with the latter being a misappropriation of virtue. Herdt quotes Hauerwas[83] (1985:37 in Herdt, 2012a:207):

> in the history of ethics the language of virtue became associated, especially in the Stoics, with the descriptions of actions or duties as defining particular classifications of virtues. The focus was thus shifted from the agent to the value of certain actions for the public domain. It was assumed that the way one becomes virtuous is by conforming to the prescribed acts and duties.

Stanley Hauerwas[84] negotiates this divide in his focus on "virtue-talk" "not simply" as "a way of making sense of the supererogatory or of turning attention to characteristics of agents rather than of acts" (Hauerwas in Herdt, 2012a:205). It is a way of capturing something irreducibly theological[85] about how Christians understand what they are doing. Herdt recalls the words of Hauerwas (Hauerwas in Herdt, 2012a:205):

> it is necessary to maintain the specificity of Christian moral behaviour in order to do justice to the theological claim Christians make that their moral life is intimately connected with their religious convictions. Christians believe their moral values are an inseparable part of the meaning of the faith they confess.

With regards to the secularisation of moral thought, Jennifer Herdt describes how Hauerwas turns to the category of character because he finds it a corrective both to characteristically Protestant and characteristically secular modern ailments (Hauerwas in Herdt, 2012:208-209). She affirms Hauerwas' argument that (Hauerwas in Herdt, 2012:208-209):

> Both have had trouble speaking about the identity of the moral agent over time, about moral growth. Protestants, with their emphasis on justification, have tended to divorce the hidden, inner, justified self from the outer visible self, have emphasized the latter's sinfulness, and have regarded the moral life as a site where one is repeatedly confronted with God's command, not a locus of gradual moral development…Lutheran themes, given a Reformed reworking by Karl Barth's ethic of command, have fed into empty situation ethics, in which now the command comes void of content, demanding only that we do the loving thing in the concrete situation

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[83] This quote of Hauerwas' explanation is referenced by Jennifer Herdt as, "Hauerwas, Stanley 1985a. *Character and the Christian Life.* 2nd edition. San Antonio, Tex: Trinity University Press." (2012a:225).

[84] Jennifer Herdt references her quote of Hauerwas as follows: "Hauerwas, Stanley 1973. "The Self as Story: A Reconsideration of the Relation of Religions and Morality from the Agent's Perspective." *Journal of Religious Ethics* 13.2 (Fall): 185-209." (2012a:225).

[85] When reflecting on the work of Hauerwas it is appropriate to mention two Professors of Stellenbosch University who wrote their DTh on themes pertaining to Hauerwas, namely, Robert Vosloo who is the head of Systematic Theology and Ecclesiology at Stellenbosch University and Nico Koopman who is currently the Dean of the Faculty of Theology. The contributions are respectively: Vosloo, R. 1994. *Verhaal en Moraal: 'n Kritiese ondersoek na die narratiewe etiek van Stanley Hauerwas*. Source: LMS SUN and Koopman, N. 2000. *Dade of Deugde?: implikasies vir Suid-Afrikaanse Kerke van 'n modern-postmoderne debar oor die moraliteit.* Source: LMS SUN.

Jennifer Herdt articulates her indebtedness to Hauerwas' insight toward the Protestant "emphasis on justification" (Herdt, 2012a:208), which "has tended to divorce the hidden, inner, justified self from the outer visible self" (Herdt, 2012a:208) and finds the moral life to be "a site where one is repeatedly confronted with God's command, not a locus of gradual moral development" (Herdt, 2012a:208). This comment is noteworthy in its preparation of the reader toward the turn to participation and liturgy echoed in the concluding section of *Putting on Virtue* (Herdt, 2012b:342-352), where Herdt introduces concepts such as narratives, performance and liturgy as basis for moral reflection.

Jennifer Herdt shows how the understanding that morality brought human persons into relation with God was undermined by the inconsistencies within Christian ethics. The inconsistencies lead to the secularisation of moral thought which had a misplaced emphasis on actions instead of the agent of the action, a shift which restricted the role of grace in bringing an agent into relation with God. Herdt seeks to return the emphasis on the agent of virtue by emphasising the role of grace as working through ordinary processes of habituation (2012b:3). Human persons are accordingly enabled to participate in God by means of grace.

4.3 Participation in God through virtue

The claim by contemporary philosophical ethics that individuals are "responsible for their moral reflections and actions" (Herdt, 2012a:210) are problematic for Jennifer Herdt. She argues, "Gone is the concern for articulating the conditions for responsible agency, for being able to claim one's actions as one's own" (2012a:210). Herdt affirms her statement by quoting Hauerwas[86] (Hauerwas, 1981:262n10):

> My rebuttal, which follows, requires that the self be formed by a tradition (and its correlative virtues) that is sufficient to interpret our behaviour truthfully. Thus, the categories of character, agency, and intention recede, while those of community, narrative, and tradition come to the foreground …

Contemporary philosophical ethics motivated the Christian tradition to erect its own moral vocabulary with a narrative that (Herdt, 2004b:202):

> moves not, as Schneewind does, from a view of man as lowly and needing external control to a much higher estimate of our capacities, particularly our ability to govern ourselves (Schneewind in Herdt, 2004b:202) but rather from an understanding of human beings as created in the image of God and capable, through the renewal of grace, of self-government by virtue of participating in divine reason to a view of human freedom as competing with divine freedom and thus of human self-government as necessarily a rejection of divine government.

Indicative of Jennifer Herdt's reflection is an approach to human agency and autonomy that is seen as not opposing God's autonomy or symbolising disobedience, but a participatory approach to virtue and morality.

[86] The particular contribution is referenced by Jennifer Herdt as, "Hauerwas, Stanley 1981. *A Community of Character: Toward a Constructive Christian Social Ethic.* Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press." (2012a: 225).

Cudworth[87], representative of the Cambridge Platonists[88], asserts this approach in his retention of a "teleological account of the soul's final end as participation in God" (Cudworth in Herdt, 1999:47). Jennifer Herdt writes (Cudworth in Herdt, 1999:50):

> For Cudworth, God is important to morality not primarily as external to the world … but rather as the Good, the internal telos of human action, immanent in-and yet transcending- human love and goodness. Participation in God is not bestowed on human beings in heaven as a reward for good behaviour on earth: rather, participation in God is what we do more and more deeply as we grow in perfection.

Premised on the account given by Cudworth (1996), autonomy becomes a means by which humans can act in goodness. Acting in goodness is a way of participating in God (Herdt, 1999:64)[89]. This participation was often seen as the height of earthly happiness. This account of autonomy was not evident in first theological reflections on moral tradition and the function of virtue therein. Instead, sixteenth century thinkers understood "the project of acquiring virtue" as "fundamentally dishonest not because it is a betrayal of the authentic self but rather because it is a false and fruitless assertion of human moral agency" (Herdt, 2012b:1).

Often the internal logic of traditions were questioned and re-appropriated in the presence of epistemological crises (Herdt, 1998:528) present in the sixteenth century. Herdt describes this internal questioning as evidence of a healthy functioning tradition. The assessment of this questioning as "undermining the category of tradition would be to treat tradition as requiring some sort of static substance, a "deposit" that underlies historical change" (2004b:199).

The basis of traditions, where ethos and worldview are linked according to anthropologist Clifford Geertz[90] (Geertz in Herdt, 2000:169), allow for the investigation of human experience. Problematic to Enlightenment thinkers, however, was that religion was seen to define experience (Geertz in Herdt, 2000:171), unlike science which was based on induction from experience. Inherent in the tension was the "necessity for autonomous individual judgment" (Herdt, 2000:171). Faith in the authoritativeness of tradition had been undermined (Herdt, 2000:171), which meant that "it could not lend authority or objectivity to a particular ethos by rendering it part of the unquestioned furniture of the world" (Herdt, 2000:171). This is a plausible reason why different accounts of virtues were developed based on notions of autonomy and human agency.

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[87] Jennifer Herdt's remarks on Cudworth is referenced by her as follows: "Ralph Cudworth, *A Treatise Concerning Eternal and Immutable Morality* with *A Treatise of Freewill* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 170-171." (1999:64).

[88] The *Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy* describes philosophers who found resonance with Plato and Plotinus as sharing "the Renaissance Humanist regard for the achievements of ancient philosophy, but like the Humanists of the Renaissance, their interest was dictated by their sense of the relevance of classical philosophy to contemporary life. They also emphatically repudiated the scholasticism that prevailed in academic philosophy and took a lively interest in the developments that brought about the scientific revolution. They therefore form part of the philosophical revolution of the seventeenth century, especially since they sought an alternative philosophical foundation to Aristotelianism which was waning fast in the face of challenges from skepticism and competing alternative philosophies, notably those of Hobbes and Descartes. They were the first philosophers to write primarily and consistently in the English language" (*Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy:* 2008) and are distinct "from their philosophical contemporaries" in having a theological background (*Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy:* 2008).

[89] In the article "The Rise of Sympathy and the question of divine suffering", Jennifer Herdt critiques Cudworth's (1996) methodology by noting that he employed incompatible strategies when attempting to reconcile God's transcendence with his sympathetic relation to the world (2001c:386). His contribution on moral philosophy and autonomy is however, found useful by Herdt.

[90] Jennifer Herdt references Geertz as follows: "Geertz, Clifford. 1963. "Religion as a Cultural System." In *Anthropological Approaches to the study of Religion*, edited by Michael Banton, 1-46. London: Tavistock." (2000:186).

As will be seen in the next section, constituents such as Aquinas and Erasmus did not find the mutual reinforcement of ethos and worldview to be problematic. Despite this optimism, ethos was exchanged for ethics. Jennifer Herdt uses Geertz' words to articulate the move toward ethics, "in some circles, a few new virtues, such as sincerity and tolerance appeared on the scene, while others, such as humility, fell by the wayside. But at another, less empirically available level, a deep irreversible change began to unfold" (Geertz in Herdt, 2000:172). Jennifer Herdt continues in the words of Geertz that "the mutual reinforcement of ethos and worldview was weakened, and thus the ethos began to seem arbitrary, culturally specific, and unmoored from its anchor in the ways things are" (Geertz in Herdt, 2000: 172).

The notion of ethics[91]implied the loss of worldview and ethos as "mutually reinforcing" in addition to the increased "distinction from manners and cultural mores" (Herdt, 2000:173). Jennifer Herdt relates (2000:172):

> The response to this change was often to reiterate particular elements of the Christian worldview while attempting to link them to something indisputable. John Locke, for example, claimed that moral obligation rested on the power of God to reward and punish, since if that was so, it would then be in everyone's self-interest to do the right thing[92].

Jennifer Herdt argues that "Locke went further in his rationale to situate this decision in each individual's conception of obedience to God, "everyone should do what he in his conscience is persuaded to be acceptable to the almighty, on whose good pleasure and acceptance depends their happiness"" (Herdt, 2003:24).

David Hume, argues Herdt (2000:172):

> rejected large parts of the Christian worldview, claiming that by filling people with fear, it failed to provide a social context in which human beings could flourish. Hume suggested that to live a virtuous life one needed only to have loving parents and to cultivate natural social sentiments.

Jennifer Herdt continues to explain that Hume depicted the movement away from the "defence of Christian morals" to "modern moral philosophy" who "sought to root itself not in disputable religious assumptions whose only defence lay in a flight to authority, but rather in shared and putatively universal truths of reason or of human nature" (2000:173).

This process of distancing from what seemed a total reliance on authoritative tradition is described by Jennifer Herdt as a "project new to Christian Europe". She terms this project "justifying morality." The justification of morality was "one expression of the growing acceptance of autonomy", the premise that "our understandings can be validated or redeemed only by appeal in some sense to human experience and reason as such" (Herdt, 2000:174).

Aquinas did not see this expression of autonomy as problematic within itself but did however see it as sufficient only for natural virtues (Herdt, 2012b:73). Natural virtues were those virtues cultivated through human effort (Herdt, 2012b:73). These were in contrast to infused virtue, which was

[91]Jennifer Herdt writes in this regard: "Ethics came to be distinguished from manners and cultural mores, with the relativity of the latter being accepted. It was simultaneously more difficult and more urgent to be able to regard the narrower realm of ethics as embodying the way things really are" (2000:172).

[92] As will be seen later in the article "Locke, martyrdom, and the disciplinarity power of the church" (Herdt, 2003), Locke was motivated by the insistence "that the point of religious faith and practices is to secure eternal happiness in the life to come" (Herdt, 2003:27).

dependent on the grace of God (Herdt, 2012b:73). Where Hume considered natural virtues to be sufficient for cultivating the good life, Jennifer Herdt explains that Aquinas would suggest these "natural, acquired virtues direct" humans "only to a "proximate and particular good," the imperfect happiness of this life" (2012b:73). According to Jennifer Herdt, Aquinas effectively draws a distinction between imperfect and perfect happiness, to which the latter is the final goal of humanity.

Jennifer Herdt notes, "only the supernatural, infused virtues are "perfect" and "virtuous simply," because only they direct us toward our ultimate end, the enjoyment of God" (2012b:73). What is made clear in this contribution is that natural virtues are in and of themselves only this (Herdt, 2012b:75). The thoughts presented in the previous paragraphs depict the growing instability that marked the legacy of moral thought from as early as the fourth century with Augustine of Hippo. It was this very instability that triggered the imagination of Jennifer Herdt. She notes in the preface to her book *Putting on virtue* (Herdt, 2012b:ix)*:*

> This book began with a certain curiosity, formed somewhat inchoately during my graduate school days at Princeton, about the fact that certain forms of Christian faith champion a theatrical conception of moral development while others judge it false and hypocritical. When, years later, I returned to puzzle this over more fully, I began to understand the issue in terms of differing understandings of the relationship between acquired virtue and infused virtue, and to see it as a key to unlocking the dynamics of early modern moral reflection. Anxiety over the authenticity of acquired virtue was a transformed and exacerbated rendition of Augustine's critique of pagan virtue that continued to shape theological and philosophical ethics well into the eighteenth century. This project took shape, then, as a particular way of narrating the story of virtue and of thereby beginning to recover and recast a Christian ethics of mimetic virtue freed from these distorting preoccupations.

It is likely that Jennifer Herdt's articles concern the appropriation of various themes to the Augustinian anxiety; articles such as "The endless construction of charity*"* (2004a), "The rise of sympathy and the question of divine suffering" (2001c) and "Christian humility, courtly civility, and the code of the streets" (2009), which depict the very wrestling with a Christian worldview amidst the development of moral thought.

In the recollection of the development of moral thought, Jennifer Herdt indicates how religious moorings were understood to be the origin of morality. The "sum of all religion" was "divine imitation" (Whichcote, 2010 in Herdt, 2001a:259), which brought "humans into relation with God" (Herdt, 2001a:259). Morality consequently served as "the normative criteria from which individuals exercise virtue" (Herdt, 2004b:197-199). The rise of rationality threatened the relationship between morality and its religious moorings however, which lead to a theological response that further encouraged a growing dichotomy between religious truth and morality. Talk of virtue was furthered exacerbated by Christian critique of secular virtues represented in the Augustinian legacy.

Jennifer Herdt points out three important moments in the attempt to establish "a Christian ethics of mimetic virtue freed from these distorting preoccupations" (2012b:ix). The first is to erect a conception of virtue premised on the agent instead of the action in itself (Hauerwas in Herdt, 2012a:207). The second is to move away from the Protestant's emphasis on justification which has "tended to divorce the hidden, inner, justified self from the outer visible self, have emphasized the latter's sinfulness, and have regarded the moral life as a site where one is repeatedly confronted with God's command" (Hauerwas in Herdt, 2012b:208-209) toward an understanding of virtue that emphasises progressive moral development (Hauerwas in Herdt, 2012b:208-209). The third is to reconceptualise the way virtue is acquired (as stemming from participation in God through virtue instead of a miraculous surd) (Herdt, 2012b:350).

In order to account for a Christian ethics of mimetic virtue, Jennifer Herdt erects a conception of virtue which is characterised by its agent, where moral development occurs progressively and the acquisition of virtue is reconceptualised. In her book *Putting on Virtue* Jennifer Herdt explains her logic for a Christian ethic of mimetic virtue.

4.4 A Christian ethic of mimetic virtue

Jennifer Herdt begins her discussion on virtue ethics by accounting for the different emphases placed on moral development. Whereas the eighteenth century thinkers considered habituation and social formation to endanger autonomy, sixteenth and seventeenth century thinkers thought the process of acquiring virtues to be a "false and fruitless assertion of human moral agency" (Herdt, 2012b:1).

In *Putting on Virtue,* Jennifer Herdt depicts two moments within the history of moral development. The first is a preoccupation with virtues as mere appearance, apparent in form, but different in reality. The acquisition of virtue was seen as performances with various constituents thinking of these performances in various ways (2012b:128). The second shift pertained more to moral anatomy and the way in which morality was socially constituted (Herdt, 2012b:221). The "enterprise of moral anatomy, which sought to unearth the processes of character formation that give rise to socially desirable character and behaviour" was "characteristic of seventeenth-century European moral thought (Herdt, 2012b: 221).

Jennifer Herdt names the latter group "Anatomists" and suggests that "some thinkers undertook this analytical project in order to facilitate a pursuit of worldly greatness that could be assimilated to the pursuit of heavenly greatness" (2012b:221-222). "Others to show how false worldly virtue providentially mimics true Christian virtue" (Herdt, 2012b:221-222) and "others yet in order to demonstrate the social utility of 'false' worldly virtue" (Herdt, 2012b:221-222). Herdt affirms that "they were united by their interest in the ways in which virtue (or at least apparent virtue) is socially constituted" (2012b:221-222).

Jennifer Herdt makes three methodological statements to her use of "virtue" in the singular instead of the plural. The first reason is that it "reflects early modern moral discourse", "rather than"[93] what she calls "my own predilections". The second reason for speaking of virtue in the singular is closely linked to the first; it "also made sense in light of the intense anxiety over personal salvation that was characteristic of early modern Augustinian thought." The third reason pertains to the reason for her study, "I am in fact focused here on issues surrounding the general structure of framework of good character and its acquisition, rather than on concrete moral norms or specific virtues" (Herdt, 2012b:10-11).

Aristotle's contribution to the discussion of virtue lies in what Jennifer Herdt calls the "habituation gap", the embodiment of virtue as an act of "doing the right thing for the right reasons" and allowing this process to move us "from semblance toward reality" (Herdt, 2012b:23). Herdt indicates in her article, "The virtue of liturgy," Aristotle's emphasis "on the craft-like character of the virtues and the apprentice-like character of the acquisition of the virtues." She explains Aristotle's thought, "a person learns to be courageous by imitating acts of courage as these are exemplified by someone who is already a master at the craft" (Herdt, 2012a:537). The process of habituation has two possible dilemmas, discovers Jennifer Herdt, habituation as "merely mechanical repetition" (2012a:537) and

[93]Jennifer Herdt affirms in this regard: "One of the important contributions the contemporary revival of virtue ethics has made to ethical discourse is to restore the capacity to speak in a differentiated way about specific aspects of character that equip a person to act well in very different respects" (2012a:10).

the possibility of the semblances of virtue in the acting thereof. Despite the inherent tension, Jennifer Herdt concedes, "even though it is not always the case that human beings do the right thing for the right reason, the position of "acting" has the potential to transform the actor"[94] (2012b:23).

Augustine's concern was the possibility that modes of "putting on" virtue cultivated in daily life remained only that, a process of "putting on" that never proceeded into transformation (Herdt, 2012b:24). The lack of transition from "acting the part" to a real transformation within the individual lead to a legacy of Augustinian anxiety where different streams of moral thought sought to erect criteria which would evidence virtue (Herdt, 2012b:24).

Jennifer Herdt steps back from initial criteria's and asks upon which premise transformation from an outward disposition toward an inward disposition is possible. In order to understand Augustine's anxiety, one must first understand the premise upon which habituation is based (Herdt, 2012b:24). Furthermore: "We must also ask in what sense virtuous action is at the same time performed for the sake of happiness and for the sake of the good aimed at by political science" (Herdt, 2012b:24). In Herdt's illustration of the process of habituation, she uses the example of a girl named Susie, who goes through a process of "moderating her most immediate desires" (Herdt, 2012b:26) based on the response she receives from external stimuli. While initially she acts in an undesirable manner, she quickly alters her behaviour in order to receive positive responses from external stimuli (Herdt, 2012b:24-27).

The process of habituation has begun, but her virtuous character is still under question. Herdt argues: "Clearly, while the child may fairly reliably exhibit good behaviour, she cannot be said to have a virtuous character" (2012b:26). What is needed in the instance of Susie is reflexivity, an "understanding of the fact that these actions are choice worthy for their own sake" (Herdt, 2012b:30). As Susie begins to combine her experience with theoretical commitments, she is more readily equipped to live for virtues own sake[95]. Herdt establishes three characteristic features that the person of virtue now possesses; first, the virtuous agent takes pleasure in virtuous action (Herdt, 2012b:31-32), second, by perceiving the beauty of virtue her actions are admirable and noble (Herdt, 2012b:31-32) and thirdly, "she has formed a reflective understanding of the good life as constituted by virtuous activity, and this has given rise to rational desires to so act" (Herdt, 2012b:31-32).

Aristotle makes an important shift in his logic in distinguishing people who act for virtues own sake and those who act merely externally for what he terms "for the sake of natural goods", also known as semblances of virtue (Aristotle in Herdt, 2005:140). The individual who acts according to the former, acts "for the sake of the noble", which is "structurally analogous to acting for the supreme end, that of happiness or *eudaimonia"* (Herdt, 2012b:34-35). Jennifer Herdt highlights in Aristotle's thought the notion that happiness in not an ultimate end within itself to which virtue is a mere instrument, instead she quotes Aristotle (Herdt, 2012b:35):

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[94] Jennifer Herdt describes the process of habituation into virtue as possible when considering the distinction made by Aristotle between right actions and virtue: "Aristotle points out, though, that virtue is not just a matter of performing certain right actions but also of the way in which these actions are produced. Truly virtuous action issues forth from knowledge, decision, and stable character" (Aristotle in Herdt, 2012b:23).

[95]Jennifer Herdt argues that the formation of initial virtue is enhanced by virtuous elders who teach children in the ways of virtuous living. Only when their experiences are shaped toward the good life, can theoretical commitments such as set out by Aristotle be truly utilised (2012b:31). Herdt accordingly states Aristotle's argument in the case of those who have not been cultivated into virtue: "Those, in contrast, who have no experiential grasp of virtuous action cannot benefit from argument and discussion concerning virtue. They are unable to express their theoretical commitments in action because their appetitive elements are not in harmony with reason" (Aristotle in Herdt, 2012b:31).

> happiness is not a subjective state that could be somehow artificially induced. The way in which happiness functions as an end seems to be not that the happy man does things in order to be happy, but rather that he does, for the sake of their own nobility, the noble things which in fact constitute the happiness which makes life worthwhile[96].

Aristotle's thought continues by extending eudaimonia to the cultivation of a common good, where the leaders of the polis serve as educating parents. Jennifer Herdt comments in this regard: "The good politician seeks to inculcate virtue in the citizens of the polis because only when citizens are virtuous can the greatest good, the end of political science, in fact be secured" (2012b:36-38). Whereas virtue was initially understood as "excellences of the individual" (Herdt, 2012b:36-38), Herdt depicts the culmination of virtue through the "fellowship" (2012b:36-38) thereof. This fellowship created an arena "for the exercise of the virtues" (Herdt, 2012b:36-38), where virtue could be cultivated for its own sake but, ultimately, also, "one will help others for their own sakes" (Herdt, 2012b:36-38). This leads her to indicate in Aristotle's thought: "Moreover, Aristotle regarded intentions as embodied in action and thus as public and visible" (Aristotle in Herdt, 2005:140).

Up to this point, Jennifer Herdt affirms that there is no opportunity for suspicion when reflecting on Aristotle's appropriation of virtue and its contribution toward eudaimonia. When questioning the modes of acquiring virtue, nothing hints at a problematic approach to agency (Herdt, 2012b:43). This is changed however in the discussion of Aristotle's magnanimous individual, whom Jennifer Herdt believes essentially undermines the social nature of happiness (2012b:43).

A magnanimous individual, Jennifer Herdt indicates, presupposes a particular way of thinking about oneself in the act of virtue; "For magnanimity has essentially to do with the virtuous person's own self-perception"[97] (2012b:28). Self-perception within itself need not be problematic, as it presupposes a type of reflexivity. Herdt continues however to problematise the concept of magnanimity when asking whether the magnanimous person is still acting for virtues sake. She asks (Herdt, 2012b:41):

> Is the magnanimous person acting for virtue's own sake? Or has he fallen into a semblance of virtue, his activity directed now instrumentally toward the end of his own consciousness of moral greatness?

The danger, explains Jennifer Herdt, is when a magnanimous person instrumentalises virtuous activity as a means to an end. Thus "her end is no longer constituted by her activity itself, as it is for one whose end is perfected rational action" (2012b:41). The outcome of this process is characterised by Herdt as "self-deception" (2012b:41), where the magnanimous person persuades themself that they possess a moral greatness "that in fact we have lost inasmuch as we now seek consciousness of moral greatness rather than virtue for its own sake" (2012b:41).

A perpetuation of self-sufficiency is indicated in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, described by Jennifer Herdt as an attempt to serve oneself and one's own greatness instead of the common wealth (2012b:42). Herdt accordingly highlights the tension inherent in Aristotle's thought in this regard (2012:42):

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[96] Jennifer Herdt underscores the importance of ethical reflection, "not because it arrives at a theory of virtue but because of how it reinforces the commitment embodied practically in the merely good person's actions by giving such a person an understanding of why she is doing what she is doing" (2012b:35).

[97] Aristotle is quoted by Herdt as defining magnanimity or being a "great-souled" person as "one who "thinks himself worthy of great things and is really worthy of them" (Herdt, 2012b:38).

> We may discern a tension here within Aristotle's thought. After all, the magnanimous person's greatness is constituted by her virtue. But Aristotle is usually quite attentive to the fact that much luck is involved in whether one succeeds in developing or fails to develop a virtuous character.

Jennifer Herdt draws on Aristotle's logic by concluding that the cultivation of virtue occurs in social settings (2012b:43). There is a "dependence" (Herdt, 2012b:42) on others for virtue's cultivation (Herdt, 2012b:42):

> Ironically, magnanimity, which was supposed to be constituted by proper self-knowledge, an accurate estimate of one's own moral greatness, seems on closer examination to involve a falsifying denial of one's own dependency on other.

This final analysis overrides the initial appreciation for the magnanimous person, preferring a communal understanding of the development of virtue over and against an individualised account (Herdt, 2012b:43). In addition, Aristotle's account of magnanimity as perfect virtue is turned on its head by Aristotle's very own requirements for true virtue (Herdt, 2012b:44):

> For what first appears as a virtue concerned with truthfulness and accurate self-perception, and specifically with truthful acknowledgement of one's own worthiness of honour, emerges instead as a falsifying grasp at godlike self-sufficiency. And even though the consciousness of one's own moral greatness is not intrinsically problematic, the fact that the magnanimous "man" pretends to self-sufficiency strongly suggests that the magnanimous man is indeed preoccupied with his own moral greatness, with himself as moral actor, in a way that competes with his commitment to virtuous activity for its own sake.

Habituation into virtue and the possibility of habituating semblances was the main concern of Christian thinkers reading Aristotle. Jennifer Herdt indicates the discomfort with which Christians approached the moment of transformation in Luther and Erasmus. Luther locates transformation whole heartedly in Christ's agency and the utter passivity of the human agent (Herdt, 2005:147), while Erasmus allowed for the possibility of external influence evoking transformation. Herdt describes this as a "sympathetic account" towards natural virtue[98] (2005:142).

Jennifer Herdt accounts for a Christian ethic of virtue by beginning with Aristotle's notion of habituation into virtue. An emphasis is placed on the agent of the action instead of the action itself. By affirming the role of the agent, Herdt alludes to the possibility that grace may initiate an individual into relation with God through virtue. Augustine however, was more concerned about the semblance of virtue than the possible soteriological effect on the agent.

4.5 Mimetic performance of virtue

The growing discomfort of distinguishing between the virtuous and those who are merely acting the part is depicted by Jennifer Herdt in the early church father Augustine, who initiated the debate that continued well into the eighteenth century. She calls this the theatrical nature of human virtue, as constituted by the acting of one individual based on the exemplar of another (Herdt, 2012b:65). Christian virtue, for Augustine, is centred on "a pure intention, directed solely to God" (Herdt, 2012b:47), unlike pagan virtues critiqued by Augustine as being "puffed up and proud" and "employed in the service of human glory" (Herdt, 2005:542).

[98]I would like to reiterate the distinction made by Jennifer Herdt between infused virtue, which was described as the transcendent "breaking in" to transform natural virtue through grace vis-à-vis natural/acquired virtue, which was restricted to virtue cultivated through social settings (Herdt, 2012b:4).

The process of directing our virtuous acting toward God is possible, for Augustine, only through mimesis of Christ. Jennifer Herdt describes this process as beginning with the act of conversion (2012b: 47):

> In this life, Christian virtue remains imperfect, embattled, our loves divided. It is grace that converts us, that turns us from self to God by confronting us with divine beauty so irresistible that we cannot but fall in love with it- the beauty of God in Christ. Having fallen in love, we want naturally to draw closer to our beloved and seek to do so through imitation, since like assimilates like. Habituation in Christian virtue is thus much more than the imitation of exemplars of human virtue, through it is also this. Made in the image of God, but having lost through sin our likeness to God, we are restored through mimesis of Christ.

Herdt understands mimesis to be the restoration of the image of God, which brings into relation "virtue, happiness, and our final end" as indicated by Augustine (Augustine in Herdt, 2012b:55). She describes (Herdt, 2012b:55, 60):

> virtue is not the way I demonstrate to God that I am worthy of the reward of eternal life: rather, "virtue proves to be nothing but the perfection of the love of God". And it is when my love to God is perfected that I can experience the union with God, which is fruition, the love of enjoyment. Virtue proves after all to be not just instrumental but partially constitutive of my happiness, of my final end…My final end is not just external: even though I cannot in this life fully realize that loving union with God, my loving, virtuous activity is even now an expression of the love of God … Finally, it is through the Christian's responsiveness to grace that mimesis may take place, permeating every act done by Christians.

Jennifer Herdt uses the logic of mimesis to indicate the theatrical nature of virtue, "that we must" act virtuously in order to become actually virtuous …" (2012b:61). Augustine, in accordance with Plato, critiques bad examples of mimesis alleging that they "care only for appearances, and manipulate these appearances in order to maximize their own honour and glory" (Herdt, 2012b:66). Herdt quotes Hudert[99] on Augustine (Hudert in Herdt, 2012b:66), "What centrally concerns him are the developed patterns of public performance by which authoritative standards of common morality may be corrupted into opportunities for the enhancement of pride." The solution, she suggests, is to direct all "performance and rhetoric" toward "the honour and glory of God" (Herdt, 2012b:67).

Augustine's priority toward the transcendent is delineated by Jennifer Herdt. She begins with a discussion of "Augustine's eudaimonism" (2012b:57), wherein participation and enjoyment of the divine effectuates true happiness. This participation requires recognition of our dependence and a willingness to be in relation with God who is eternal and abiding[100], Herdt argues (2012b:57):

> Happiness is found not in achieving independence but in embracing our ultimate dependency…while our final good is not fully up to us, it is something that requires our active participation: it is not something that we simply passively undergo[101]. If virtue is the perfection of my love for God, the end of

[99] Jennifer references Hudert as "E. J. Hudert, "Augustine and the Sources of the Divided Self," *Political Theory* 20 (1992): 94, 95." (2012b: 366).

[100] Jennifer Herdt shows how Augustine understands God's divine beauty as means of initiating a relationship with humanity: "In order for our loves to be properly ordered-ordered, that is, to God- we must be inspired, we must first fall in love, with God" (Augustine in Herdt, 2012b:66).

[101] This will prove to evoke an intriguing conversation, as Jennifer Herdt notes Luther's fundamental belief that righteousness (which may perhaps be a plausible alternative to a virtuous person) comes through utter passivity, where we are given gift out of our utter dependence (2005:150).

> enjoyment[102] of God cannot be fully characterized apart from my virtuous activity, my loving response to God. We find happiness in the perfected activity of receiving and returning God's gifts.

Augustine provided a legacy from which Christian moral thinkers would continue to develop the relation of virtue to happiness and their dependence on either the common good or God. For Jennifer Herdt, Augustine's conceptual categories "are not differentiated adequately enough to account for the variety of semblances of virtue found among pagans (and Christians)" (2012b:61).

A focus on Aquinas and later Erasmus (amongst others) brings to the fore different appropriations of virtue in relation to happiness and the good life.

Jennifer Herdt investigates Aquinas' rehabilitation of Aristotelian magnanimity while retaining Augustine's emphasis on grace and Christian dependence. She shows that Aquinas' theorising of virtue was not satisfactory for some. "While Aristotle's philosophy continued to be regarded as authoritative by virtually everyone, many thought Aquinas had failed to show how Aristotle's thought could in fact be reconciled with Christian, notably Augustinian, commitments" (Herdt, 2012b:92).

Despite the apparent difficulty in Aquinas' thought, Jennifer Herdt shows a similarity in thought with the Christian humanist Erasmus. She emphasises that (Herdt, 2012b: 9):

> The moral life, we might suggest, is not divided into two regions, one subject to empirical exploration and the other mysterious, but is rather always at once both ordinary and mysterious. We encounter, after all (as Aquinas himself affirms), not a simple dichotomy between nature and grace but manifold forms of grace-enabled human agency. We can affirm the radical dependence of all human agency on divine sustenance while also insisting that the quality of that dependence is transformed when acknowledged and embraced. We can affirm the redemptive activity of the Word at work throughout created-but-fallen nature while also insisting that the equality of that redemptive activity is transformed when the Word is known as Jesus Christ and His Spirit is known in the church.

Jennifer Herdt indicates in the passage presented previously the ways in which Aquinas and Erasmus respectively sought to work out the relation of virtue to the final goal of enjoyment of God, the foundation of happiness. Aquinas and Erasmus sought to mediate between heavenly and earthly "flourishing", (Herdt, 2012b:76) by acknowledging the possibility of "pagan virtues" (Herdt, 2012b:76).

In Aquinas' attempt to account for the possibility of pagan virtue, an interpretive framework was opened whereby grace could potentially transform the actor of virtue. Jennifer Herdt alludes to this in Aquinas, "although pagan virtues are not directed to our final end, since this requires infused grace, they are directed to true goods that are open to further ordering to our final end of enjoyment of God" (2012b:74). Aquinas "consequently contrasts the thought of Augustine that only Christians are able of being directed toward the right ordering of the soul, even if this was only perfected in heaven" (Herdt, 2012b:53) by rehabilitating magnanimity.

Jennifer Herdt describes the skilful manner in which Aquinas redefined the pursuit of magnanimity "so that its focal point is the pursuit of great actions, not the agent's self-perception as worthy of great honour, a man is said to be magnanimous chiefly because he is minded to do some great act" (2012b:77). More specifically, she indicates (Herdt, 2012b:77):

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[102] Jennifer Herdt continues to qualify Augustine's eudaimonism by noting, "we cannot enjoy God in this life, since in this life we cannot fully see God, and our love remains the love of desire rather than fruition, but the possibility of the enjoyment rests on our (God-enabled) response as well as on God's call" (2012b:57).

> magnanimity is about handling honour appropriately. In this way the possession of greatness comes not from human effort but is held in consideration of the gifts he holds from God. The magnanimous person in consideration of the gift bestowed on him considers this in humility.

Jennifer Herdt continues (2012b:77):

> The magnanimous man refers the honour he receives on to God, for a man has not from himself the thing in which he excels, for this is as it were, something Divine in him, wherefore on this count honour is due principally, not to him but to God.

The rehabilitation of magnanimity allows Aquinas to transition from virtues without internal referents[103] to virtues with external referents. This does not necessarily mean that the referent is explicitly known by the virtuous person as being the source of virtue. Habituation into virtue is therefore understood as acquiring virtue, devoid of explicit knowledge of God as source. To this dilemma Aquinas introduces the concept of infused virtues (Herdt, 2012b:83).

Herdt further elaborates on the nature of virtue (2012b:84):

> Virtues dispose us well in relation to our ends. But the acquisition of virtue requires that we be capable of perceiving the end and loving it as such. So the acquired virtues can dispose us to act for our end insofar as this is grasped by human reason, but they cannot dispose us well in relation to our ultimate end, since this end, the enjoyment of God, exceeds the proportion of human nature.

Jennifer Herdt continues (2012b:84):

> In order to be disposed well in relation to our ultimate end, we need virtues infused in us by God rather than acquired through human action: it is necessary for man to receive from God some additional principles, whereby he may be directed to supernatural happiness.

The purpose of infused virtue, Jennifer Herdt indicates, is not to displace acquired virtue, but rather to enhance natural virtue in various respects. The first of which she understands as levelling "the playing field by signalling that upbringing, intellectual capacity and so on, are not decisive for one's capacity for friendship with God" (Herdt, 2012b:89-90). Herdt states however, that this does not mean (2012b:89-90):

> the displacement of human action. Salvation is made possible through the bestowal of infused virtues, dispositions to act. Human beings must act to increase these virtues and bring them to perfection, and only through this process will they become persons capable of enjoying God, capable of their own ultimate good" (Herdt, 2012b:89-90).

In the final instance, "the virtues prepare us to rely on an agency other than our own"[104] (Herdt, 2012b:89-90). Openness to an agency other than our own does not imply passivity and abrupt intervention by the Divine for Aquinas (Herdt, 2012b:91). Instead (Herdt, 2012b:91):

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[103] In Aquinas' rehabilitation of magnanimity, he introduces God as responsible for that disposition. In this sense, God is a referent to the virtue in question (Herdt, 2012b:78).

[104] Jennifer Herdt makes a qualification in this regard, "such comments can be misleading, however, insofar as they suggest a culminating displacement of human activity. Aquinas, though, is concerned to link the gifts very closely to the virtues. He refrains from calling them virtues proper (although he is willing to call them 'Divine virtue, perfecting man as moved by God'). He does insist on calling them habits. They are habits because they are actual 'perfections of man,' which 'abide in' human beings. That is, they are stable dispositions to act, not simply the Holy Spirit coming over someone for a passing moment" (2012b:91).

> There is no competition between divine and human agency here, such that if human beings are moved by God they must themselves be passive. At the same time, human agency is fulfilled not through independence or self-sufficiency but instead by being willingly dependent, fully open to God's gift, thus perfecting the charity that unites human being with God.

Erasmus and Luther continued the conversation on virtue and its relation to grace and human agency, albeit in divergent ways. Whereas Erasmus focussed on the habituation of virtue from the outside-in, Luther believed that humans were "to relinquish any reliance on human agency" (Herdt, 2012b:173-174) due to the absolute destruction "of the image of God in us" (Herdt, 2012b:173-174) "by Adam's fall" (Herdt, 2012b:173-174). Despite their differences, Jennifer Herdt highlights their shared priority to "uncover hypocrisy", "attack ceremonialism" and the understanding that "true goodness" and "true piety, had to be inner and spiritual" (2012b:173).

Established within what Jennifer Herdt calls the "studia humanitatis,"[105] Erasmus regarded an individual's final good "as something contingent on external conformity to commandments, rather than as the culmination of an inner transformation" (Herdt, 2012b:104). Herdt alludes to Levi Anthony's[106] argument (Anthony in Jennifer Herdt, 2012b:106):

> that human perfection, including the religious perfection which was grace-aided and necessarily rewarded by eternal salvation had to be intrinsic to the fulfilment of the highest human moral aspirations inscribed on rational nature itself, and not something different from or in addition to human moral achievement, as measured by rational norms[107].

Jennifer Herdt addresses the notions of agency at the centre of Erasmus' theology. She writes: "The heart of *philosophia Christi* is the re-formation of human nature through conformity with Christ" (2012b:112). Erasmus' unsystematic "discussion of grace and human freedom" (Herdt, 2012b:112) has evoked a variety of interpretations. Jennifer Herdt states in this regard (2012b:112):

> Its lack of systematicity is also a virtue, though. It does not attempt to pin down the respective contributions of divine and human agency as synergism does: it simply insists on the priority of grace, on free human response, and on the dependency of this response … Human freedom is not defined as acting within a space devoid of divine agency.

The challenge levelled at human agency with its ability to progressively habituate into virtue was two-fold. It either embraced the human capacity to habituate into perfect virtue or it became essentially hubristic. Erasmus develops the notion of the "inexhaustible exemplarity," "which Christians can image or reflect only in some limited and finite respect". Christians can consequently only imitate Christ in their "own particular natural form" (Herdt, 2012b:118). For Erasmus then, there is a failure to "grasp what is involved in the imitation of Christ if we understand it only as an exercise of human agency. For Erasmus, the exercise of human agency involved in the imitation of Christ is at the same time an indwelling of Christ in us and thus a human participation in divine agency" (Herdt, 2012b:119).

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[105]Herdt describes *studia humanitatis* as "a specific group of studies based on the reading of ancient Latin and Greek classics, with rhetoric foremost among them. The humanists were united first by their rhetorical concerns and their reliance on classical modes for rhetoric rather than by a substantial normative position" (2012b:102).

[106] Jennifer Herdt references the contribution of Levi Anthony as follows, "Anthony Levi, *Renaissance and Reformation: The Intellectual Genesis* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2002), 10. (2012b: 375).

[107]Jennifer Herdt highlights the eudaimonist conception of the humanists, "on this account, the humanists sought to sustain a teleological, eudaimonist conception of human moral activity. They did not pursue virtue as instrumental to glory, fame, and honour, but they did seek to show that spiritual and moral aspirations are not alien to one another, that the pursuit of virtue and the pursuit of salvation, properly understood, are one and the same" (2012b:106).

Jennifer Herdt continues to show how grace is active in the acting of the virtuous in Erasmus' thought (2012b:119):

> For Erasmus, grace is active in our acting, in the beauty of virtue displayed that engages and transforms our affections, allowing us to play a part that becomes our own as we play it. While imitation is an act, there is also a chastening of human agency implied in the cascade.

Hereafter, Jennifer Herdt begins to unpack the theatrical and performative nature of virtue, a key concept in developing her understanding of virtue. Luther[108], in contrast to Erasmus, understood "a special sort of self-emptying" to "be the starting point, not something toward which we gradually advance"[109] (Herdt, 2012b:175). Herdt describes this shift in focus as "an exodus from virtues to the grace of Christ" (2012b:176) founded on the notion "that human agency is utterly enslaved to sin and incapable of anything good" (Herdt, 2012b:174). She describes Luther's rationale (2012b:176).

> For Luther the honest sinner is closer to righteousness than the aspirant to virtue…It is better truthfully to confess one's enslavement to sin than to put on an act of virtue, struggling to free oneself from sin. Only one who knows herself as a sinner truly knows herself, and the law, says Luther, is given to humanity in order to "teach man to know himself.

It becomes clear through Jennifer Herdt's recollection of Luther that "what restores to us the image of God, he insists, is not successful imitation of Christ but a marriage that unites otherwise alienated parties" (2012b:177-178). With the analogy of a marriage, Luther is able to describe the process of sanctification. Whereas Erasmus understands friendship as assimilation, "friendship with God is the assimilation of copy with original, and thus the union of like with like, of copy assimilating with original" (Herdt, 2012b:178), for Luther, "friendship is predicated not on likeness but on a union with Christ that is therefore quite differently conceived" (Herdt, 2012b:178).

Erasmus describes sanctification in the example of baptism. Jennifer Herdt describes Erasmus' train of thought, stating that "baptism brings forgiveness from sins and gives us a new start on the path of salvation, but it is one step in an extended healing process, a process of renewal in God's image that culminates in union of lover and beloved" (Erasmus in Herdt, 2012b:178). Luther rejects this notion and believes instead that "union with Christ is not the culmination but the precondition for any process of sanctification" (Herdt, 2012b:178).

The precondition of union in Christ, Jennifer Herdt recalls, alludes for Luther to the fact that, "the pursuit of virtue poses such ineradicable barriers to proper trust in and acknowledgment of God that it must be abandoned and moral agency ceded to Christ within"[110] (2012b:184). Whilst Luther rejects Aristotelian habituation into virtue, Jennifer Herdt indicates how Luther navigates between the

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[108]Jennifer Herdt makes a very apt observation of Luther's context, "the theologians of the via moderna, in which Luther was formed, lacked the patristic understanding of mimesis as assimilation, even if they retained some emphasis on Christ as moral exemplar. Persons are justified through having fulfilled the minimum condition specified by God's covenant with humanity, with no inherent reference to the incarnation and death of Christ" (2012b:177).

[109] When speaking of Luther, Jennifer Herdt indicates "his insistence, though, that its starting point and foundation be a perfect recognition and acknowledgment of the bankruptcy of human agency renders what in Erasmus is a dawning recognition into an absolute prerequisite" (2012b:175).

[110] In the end, Luther does "speak of a gradual transformation of character that constitutes assimilation with, not simply marriage to, Christ. It is difficult, though, to integrate the account of habituation with Luther's prior insistence on human passivity and the displacement of human agency by the indwelling Christ" (Herdt, 2012b:184).

emphasis on transformation through sanctification without handing some form of participation over to human agency. Herdt indicates (2012b:184):

> one of the most helpful approaches to this topic is through Luther's contrast between grace and gift ... Both grace and the gift are given freely by God, but they are distinct in that grace affects our forensic status before God, while the gift transform our characters[111].

Individuals who are possibly unaware of God's grace and gift[112] are unable to receive it, as they are still within a state of active human striving. To which Jennifer Herdt "fills out Luther's train of thought" by referring to the analogy of baptism previously mentioned. She shows how Luther employs theatrical metaphors to explain justification (Herdt, 2012b:180):

> for Luther God is primarily judge rather than author or audience. And yet in some sense God is audience, less concerned with which actor plays what role than that the roles are properly played out, with sinners condemned and righteous embraced … So Christians must remember that while we have "put on" Christ, we ourselves remain sinners. We are acceptable to the divine audience not by virtue of our own active righteousness but by virtue of the righteous costume to which we have submitted.

The language of performance allows Jennifer Herdt to speak of virtuous action as no longer centred in human effort, but rather in recognition of our dependence on Christ. The imitation of Christ disposes us toward virtuous living, which is no longer suspect of being mere semblances. Happiness is no longer part of the process of habituation into virtue as Aristotle noted, but is found within the mimetic performance toward community and church. Jennifer Herdt underscores this in her final comments to her book *Putting on virtue* (2012b:350)*:*

> Contemporary revivers of virtues ethics … have enthusiastically embraced the notion that habituation in virtue takes place within the context of a community and its practices. This focus on the communal formation of character and agency helps to relieve the theological reservations about virtue…A vision of Christian virtue as formed by the church and its practices has also made possible a naturalized account of the Christian moral life that renders Christian moral agency intelligible as agency rather than a miraculous surd…On this view, it is not through an instantaneous evangelical rebirth, a lightning bolt from heaven, that Christian are made such, but through hearing Scriptures that proclaim the story of God with us and participating in the practices of the church constituted by its willingness to be defined by that story. Christian identity is thus formed gradually, in time, by forces that are embodied and open to view-narratives, institutions, practices.

A mimetic understanding of Christian virtue allows for the development of a "divine community" (Herdt, 2012b:350-351). Jennifer Herdt continues in her argument (2012b:350-351):

> as our exploration of a mimetic understanding of Christian virtue underscores, the sort of character formation that takes place through imitation of exemplars of virtue can be understood at the same time as

[111] Jennifer Herdt further works out the distinction between grace and gift: "Through grace we are justified before God, despite our sinfulness. The gift, in contrast, which Luther equates with both faith and the indwelling Christ, gradually cleanses us from sin: 'faith is the gift and inward good which purges the sin to which it is opposed' … Faith is an infused gift, which works to transform us from within … While we are married to Christ despite our likeness, so that our sins may be imputed to him and his righteousness to us, through the gift we are gradually assimilated to our Spouse…" (Herdt, 2012b:184).

[112] Herdt has titled this section of the chapter "Aristotle and the Sophists", which alludes to her appropriation of Luther's relation to the habituation of virtues" (2012b:181).

> a form of habituation through which human communities perpetuate their practices and traditions, and as God's transforming activity, drawing us into the divine community[113].

An important qualification is made by Jennifer Herdt in light of a mimetic understanding of virtue (2012b:351):

> The hyper-Augustinian tendency to protect the purity of Christian righteousness by conceiving of grace as acting outside of or against natural human agency has, then, been productively overcome.

Once Jennifer Herdt has effectively overcome the Augustinian anxiety, she develops her understanding of a virtuous community through a "thicker, more holistic account of the Christian life" (2012b:351). Herdt indicates how this thicker description is centred on a Christian community in progress (2012b:351). "What I envision here is based not on a neutral account of human nature but on a Christian account of nature as we encounter it- already fallen and in the process of being redeemed" (Herdt, 2012b:351). The language of performance and liturgy is used by Jennifer Herdt to illustrate a broken but redeemed Christian community in progress.

In an account of mimetic performances, grace turns the agent from self to God. A response is evoked in the agent who wants to be in relation with God by imitating Christ. Through imitation the agent is progressively assimilated to Christ, an act which signifies the theatrical nature of virtue. Mimetic performances, furthermore, underscore a communal formation of character when situated within particular liturgies.

4.6 Liturgies: arenas for Christian virtue

Language of performance, narratives[114] and liturgy underscore Jennifer Herdt's conception of virtue as essentially mimetic (2012b:344):

> It understands the virtues as perfecting human persons in ways that allow them to participate more fully in the fellowship of the divine life, and thus regards perfect virtue as constituted by a love of God that completes rather than competes with love of human persons, including ourselves, and of other finite goods. It accepts virtue as a gift the goodness of which is rightly honoured even as it is also always rightly directed to God as its ultimate source. It understands the gift as mediated through Scripture, church, and sacraments and also through ordinary inclinations and social relationships…

A methodological comment is made by Jennifer Herdt in her affirmation of virtue as a gift. By conceptualising virtue as a gift, Herdt does not find it legitimate to distinguish between acquired and infused virtue, but instead suggests a "rehabilitation of acquired virtue" since "non-competitive account of human and divine agency" (2012b:169) have been established. She finds it useful to speak of Christian "virtue:" instead of erecting a dichotomy between acquired and infused virtue, she argues by means of Jean Porter[115] (Porter in Herdt, 2012b:430):

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[113] Jennifer Herdt shows how, in this conception of mimetic virtue, the hyper-Augustinian anxiety has been overcome: "The hyper-Augustinian tendency to protect the purity of Christian righteousness by conceiving of grace as acting outside of or against natural human agency has, then, been productively overcome" (2012b:351).

[114] The following section is based on two of Jennifer Herdt's substantial contributions to conversations of virtue. Both articles have a relation to Hauerwas and Wells, the 2004 and 2011 edition of *The Blackwell Companion to Christian Ethics.* In the former, Jennifer Herdt focuses on Hauerwas' development of Christian Ethics with particular focus on Virtue Ethics and the latter is an afterword to the 2011 edition of the Companion namely, "The virtue of the liturgy".

[115] The contribution of Jean Porter is cited by Jennifer Herdt as "The Subversion of Virtue: Acquired and Infused Virtues in the *Summa Theologiae," Annual of the Society of Christian Ethics* (1992): 19-41; here 38-39." (2012b:430).

> I have focused here primarily on Protestant virtue ethics rather than on Catholic (largely Thomist) retrievals of the language of virtue … My hunch is that talking about the infused virtues threatens to trade away some of the gains associated with the turn to virtue, in that it reintroduces a strong contrast between nature and grace, natural and supernatural. Jean Porter is frank about the difficulties associated with retrieving the acquired/infused distinction for contemporary Christian ethics, in particular the problems posed for a coherent account of human agency by the presence within an individual of both acquired and infused virtues and the presupposition of a sharp distinction between natural and supernatural.

For Jennifer Herdt then, the avenue of critiquing particular virtues and vices and distinguishing infused from acquired virtue is not the one she is primarily concerned with, instead she seeks to indicate that God through God's grace can utilise "forms of "secular" virtue" (Herdt, 2012b:431) to form Christian character. This does entail a critical stance towards virtue's formative potential, but does not warrant a critical stance that sets Christian virtue over and against secular virtue as defining category. Herdt argues (2012b:431):

> Rather than using secular modernity primarily as a contrast point against which Christian identity is defined, it seeks to determine with which forms of "secular" virtue Christians can best stand in solidarity. This is not to say that the virtues are always and everywhere the same, or that any generic account of moral development is available. When Christ is known as God's ultimate act of loving self-revelation, when our dependency on grace is fully recognized and joyfully embraced, this will transform our character, and not simply in terms of something added on but all the way down.

Of similar significance is Hauerwas and Pinches' appropriation of acquired and infused virtue within the Christian narrative, established in the book *Christians among the virtues*. "Setting aside a two-tiered account of acquired and infused virtues, the authors suggest that Aristotle's account of how the virtues are acquired can serve as a rich resource for displaying how training in the virtues might occur" (Hauerwas & Pinches in Herdt, 2012a:215). Training in the virtues are not finally to be distinguished from infusion of the virtues; the virtues are indeed infused "by a special act of God which brings us into relation with God," (Hauerwas & Pinches in Herdt, 2012a:215) but this occurs over time through "participation in the body of Christ," (Hauerwas & Pinches in Herdt, 2012a:215), which "involves our reception of the sacraments of baptism and eucharist, but also includes (and entails) immersion in the daily practices of the Christian church: prayer, worship, admonition, feeding the hungry, caring for the sick, etc." (Hauerwas & Pinches, in Herdt, 2012a:215).

One might recall at this point the discussion of Alasdair MacIntyre's[116] logic, (MacIntyre in Herdt, 2012b:345):

> that the virtues require for their intelligibility reference to living practices and traditions: the virtues find their point and purpose not only in sustaining the form of an individual life in which that individual may seek out his or her good as the good of his or her whole life, but also in sustaining those traditions which provide both practices and individual lives with their necessary historical context.

The reference to tradition leads Herdt to a discussion on the development of Christian ethics to virtue ethics and potential problems that may be levelled at virtue ethics[117]. This becomes a long discussion

[116] Jennifer Herdt references the contribution of MacIntyre as, "Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981)." (2012b: 428).

[117] Jennifer Herdt indicates how the invocation of tradition and context has provided a platform for Christian Ethics to develop: "This argument has been embraced perhaps more wholeheartedly by Christian ethicists than by moral philosophers, since it made it possible for aspects of Christian moral reflection that had seemed to be handicaps in the context of the dominant modern moral theories to be heralded instead as advantages. Both the intelligibility and the distinctiveness of Christian ethics have seemed easier to articulate in the context of the revival of virtue ethics. Stanley Hauerwas has led the way here in focusing increasingly on Christian

within two of Herdt's contributions, "Putting on virtue" and "Hauerwas among the virtues", with the central argument that virtue ethics potentially "falsely idealizes the church and its practices" and "that of denouncing secular modernity rather than discerning God at work within it" (2012b:347).

Jennifer Herdt is led to reflect on Hauerwas' distancing from virtue ethics to "theological reflection on Christian virtues and their social formation in the life of the church" (2012a:203). The life of the church presents to individual's particular narratives that shape their decision making and their moral behaviour, Hauerwas' emphasis, she shows (Herdt, 2012a:205):

> is on the irreducibly particular character of intentionality, on the way that intentionality is bound up with the metaphors and stories that form our vision, such that to be fed on the stories of Jesus and of the people of Israel is to live in a different world than that inhabited by those fed on other, equally particular stories.

Jennifer Herdt understands virtue-talk to be "a way of capturing something irreducibly theological about how Christians understand what they are doing" (Herdt, 2012a: 205). Herdt indicates how the new language of the virtues "was seized upon in order to legitimize both Christian ethics and the new discipline of religious ethics. It gave Christian ethics a way of remaining robustly theological as opposed to focusing on the translation of theological claims into universal moral principles" (Herdt, 2012a:206).

In his book *Character and the Christian Life*, Jennifer Herdt indicates how Hauerwas reflected on the tendency of moral thinkers to talk of virtue in terms of the "value of certain actions for the public domain" instead of focusing on the agent of the virtue (Hauerwas in Herdt, 2012a:207). This meant that Hauerwas did "not seek to define our highest good or final telos and discuss its relationship to what we usually mean by happiness" rather, "character, agency, and intention are front and centre in his analysis" (Herdt, 2012a:207).

Herdt affirms the value of speaking of character by referring to Hauerwas' response (Hauerwas in Herdt, 2012a: 209):

> Character offers us a way of capturing the continuity of the self beyond the isolated moment of decision-making. It makes it possible to articulate a Christian way of being and thus to move beyond the dead-end approaches that focus on showing that Christians will act on distinct principles or have access to an additional motive not available to non-Christians.

Finally, argues Jennifer Herdt (2012a:209):

> Character makes it possible to speak intelligibly of moral growth and sanctification. It also allows us to articulate how it is that we are autonomous centres of activity, capable of a kind of self-control or self-mastery.

The dynamic of speaking of character lies in its location of a particular individual in a particular context and the way in which virtue informs the participation of that individual with their context. Herdt quotes Hauerwas[118] in this regard, who states that "virtues must be context-dependent: the individual virtues are specific skills required to live faithful to a tradition's understanding of the moral project in which its adherents participate" (Hauerwas, 1985:115 in Herdt, 2012a: 210-211). He

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particularity- not just narrative but Scripture, not just practices but liturgical practices, not just tradition and community but the church" (2012b:345).

[118] Here Jennifer Herdt makes use of Hauerwas' contribution which is referenced by her as "Hauerwas, Stanley 1981. *A Community of Character: Toward a Constructive Christian Social Ethic.* Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press." (2012a: 225).

suggests that the virtues have an inescapable social and political referent; they are necessary not just for individual human flourishing, but for "the working of the good society"[119] (Hauerwas in Herdt, 2012a: 210-211).

Jennifer Herdt continues to indicate through Hauerwas' thought how virtues are not only to be articulated in terms of character, but is intricately related to practices and communities (Hauerwas in Herdt, 2012a:213):

> as Hauerwas insisted from early on, the realization that the virtues are not comprehensible merely as individual traits of character, but only in relation to the practices and communities in which they are formed and the traditions in which they are passed on … Without traditions of communal practice, there would be no individual instantiations of the virtues.

This shift allows Herdt to make two further comments. Firstly, the reunion of "liturgy, spirituality, theology, and ethics" with the centrality of the church as point of departure "makes it possible to articulate illuminating accounts of moral agency while still preserving the claim that formation of Christian virtue is wholly dependent on grace" (Herdt, 2012b:351). The second based on the communal nature of the church and the manner in which Christian identity is formed through multiple narratives, "that Christian identity is porous" (Herdt, 2012b:351).

Jennifer Herdt's comment on Hauerwas' use of narratives enables her to transition to the practical ways in which character and virtue are formed in Christians. Narratives serve as concrete category in which we are given the opportunity to participate in God's divine community. Herdt quotes Hauerwas[120] (Hauerwas in Herdt, 2012a: 214):

> I have increasingly become convinced that rather than talking about narrative as a category in itself, we are better advised to do theology in a manner that displays what we have learned by discovering the unavoidability of the narrative character of Christian convictions.

Jennifer Herdt affirms (2012a:214):

> Only through reflecting on the story of God with humanity that we grasp the significance of narrative, through reflecting on how humanity is called to communion with God that we grasp the significance of the virtues, and indeed, that we can differentiate the virtues from their semblances.

An "imaginative grasp of the whole form of life in which one's own activity participates" (Herdt, 2012a:537) is required. Moreover, the recognition of humans as "embodied creatures" allows one to see how the "private mental lives" of individuals "are inhabited by communal symbols and images and narratives" (Herdt, 2012a:537).

By delving into the communal character of the Christian narrative, Christians are made "participants in God's story" (Herdt, 2012a:215). Jennifer Herdt illustrates how Hauerwas evokes a demystified understanding of the activity of grace that sets "aside the false dilemmas that arise out of competitive accounts of human and divine agency" (2012a:224). Towards an understanding of grace within the

[119] It is perhaps useful to highlight Jennifer Herdt's reading of Hauerwas with regards to the communal aspect of the particular Christian context. "It is not community or narrative as such that deserves our attention, but the Church as the people formed by the story of Christ, whose primary task is to be itself". Thus, while Hauerwas speaks of Christian virtues, notably those of patience, hope, and peacefulness, "the virtues necessary for remembering the story of a crucified saviour", he has no interest in developing "virtue ethics" as such … (he) is thus more interested in the plurality of virtues required than with a singular virtue" (Herdt, 2012a:211).

[120] Herdt references this quotation as follows: "Hauerwas, Stanley, and Samuel Wells, eds. 2004. *The Blackwell Companion to Christian Ethics.* Oxford: Blackwell." (2012a: 226).

liturgy that enables exemplification and participation; "It is finally only by virtue of the liturgy, by way of the grace that inspires us to long for conformity to the exemplars before us and that disposes us to be kneaded into this body, that we can cultivate virtues in and through the liturgy" (Herdt, 2011:537).

In her contribution to *The Blackwell companion to Christian ethics*, Jennifer Herdt makes three important remarks with regard to virtue and its interrelatedness to others sets "of realizations and commitments" (2011:536). She describes (Herdt, 2011: 536):

> First, that the virtues are not individual achievement, but can be formed and sustained only in the context of community. Second, that the task of Christian ethics is not to promote virtue ethics over and against other ethical theories, but to place reflection on character and virtue at the service of growth in human friendship with God. And not, third, that Christian practices are to be cultivated as the best means to good character or a good polity, but rather that the virtues are constitutive of the life, with God and one another, that we are called to live.

Jennifer Herdt uses the concept of imagination to bridge the gap between character formation and communal participation in the Christian narrative (2011:537):

> It is at this level, of the shaping of imagination and the training of desire, that participation in Christian worship is most fundamentally formative of the virtues…we need to see how liturgy addresses us as imaginative creatures whose agency is not autonomous but must be inspired to come to life, meeting us neither merely as thinking substances or as creatures of habit, but holistically, as embodied creatures who smell and taste as well as see and hear. It envelops us as lovers of beauty, as creatures whose "private" mental lives are inhabited by communal symbols and images and narratives. As we pray together, sing together, eat together, we are being kneaded together into a body with a shared vision of the life with God to which we are called, a good which can integrate our agency and frame all of our experience.

This strokes well with Augustine's understanding of Christian virtue, expresses Jennifer Herdt (2009:551):

> it is the conviction of all those who are truly religious, that no one can have true virtue without true piety, that is without the true worship of the true God: and that the virtue which is employed in the service of human glory is not true virtue.

In her article, "Christian humility, courtly civility, and the code of the streets", Jennifer Herdt shows how the liturgy of the church is not the only "liturgy" that shapes human character. She refers to Elijah Anderson's ethnography of inner-city Philadelphia[121], which depicts the various traditions wherein vulnerable individuals exist. Each particular tradition dictates a set of social codes which are to be conformed to in order for the required character formation to take place[122]. Jennifer Herdt would perhaps classify the participation in the social contexts as conformation and not habituation (Anderson in Herdt, 2011:537), as individuals conform to preserve their status and lives. The social codes of the streets present an example of cultural liturgies, which vie for the formation of character. Herdt sounds

[121] Jennifer Herdt refers to Elijah Anderson's ethnography of inner-city Philadelphia and references it as follows: "Elijah Anderson, *Code of he Street: Decency, Violence, and the Moral Life of the Inner City* (New York, NY: W.W. Norton, 1990), pp. 80-87, 127-129, 112." (2011:559).

[122] Jennifer Herdt describes such a social context as one "in which honour or respect are such scarce goods that the virtue of humility is rendered unintelligible, appearing as a confession of lack of worth. What s thereby ruled out is the capacity to experience dependency as a gift, to unite confidence in one's own worth with the recognition that one's worth is not one's won achievement" (2009:542).

a word of caution made by thinkers such as Charles Mathewes[123]regarding such competitive secular liturgies.

Not all liturgies are negating of the formation of virtue though, positive cultural liturgies "(are) of ultimate concern: rituals that are formative for identity, that inculcate particular visions of the good life, and do so in a way that means to trump other ritual formations" (Smith[124] in Jennifer Herdt, 2011:538).

Critique has been levelled at an understanding of cultural liturgies as equally formative as the church because it allows "secular liturgies" to compete for our participation, which forms our character. A pluralistic understanding of liturgies allows Jennifer Herdt to concur with Charles Mathewes' proposal based on an "Augustinian understanding of the formation of the virtues", that Christians "are called to love the world rightly". Herdt continues from Mathewes' proposition" (Herdt, 2011:539):

> But it is Mathewes who has more successfully broken free from the seductions of 'the secular,' discerning how unhelpful it is to imply that all cultural practices that are not explicitly Christian are necessarily false liturgies, antithetical to Christian formation.

"Instead", argues Jennifer Herdt, "we can understand the secular simply as that mixed time when no single religious vision can presume to command comprehensive, confession, and visible authority, even as Christians confess the lordship of Christ" (2011:539).

In her account of liturgies as arenas for virtue, Herdt underscores her belief that a distinction between secular and Christian virtues is false. By erecting a dichotomy virtue as forum wherein God progressively brings human beings into relation with Godself is negated. In addition, contributing to the common good is understood to be secular, a categorisation that negates the possible initiative of God to bring the agent in relation with Godself through virtue. Bearing the false dichotomy in mind, she circumvents its problematique by speaking of a communal imitation of Christ's virtues.

Jennifer Herdt understands worship to be a process that conform "us to Christ" to "discern the contours of the Christian life" (2011:541). She holds that conformance to Christ (Herdt, 2011:541):

> forms us for universal solidarity with suffering humanity and that defines the imagination with which we encounter novel and newspaper and neighbourhood gathering. Christian imagination is finally liturgical rather than literary. It is not that ethics is authentically Christian only when carried out exclusively in terms of a liturgical vocabulary. Rather, it is worship that most deeply forms our moral imagination so that we know how to go on in the patient work of casuistry.

Worship, for Jennifer Herdt, is instrumental in forming "the body of Christ" in and through "God's Holy Spirit" who "gives God's people the resources they need to live in God's presence" (2011:543). Herdt reflects on praxis through liturgy instead of abstracting the sacraments. Her shift in emphasis signals an important methodological adjustment (Herdt, 2011:542) from (Herdt, 2011:543):

> ethical theory to praxis. To theorise is falsely to foster the priority of general concepts ('virtue') over particular instantiations of Christ-like love and to distract attention from the primary tasks of actually responding to God's invitation to communion, as opposed to thinking about it.

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[123] Jennifer Herdt references Mathewes as follows: "Matthewes, Charles (2007) *A Theology of Public Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press)." (2011:546).

[124] In her article "The Virtue of the Liturgy" Jennifer Herdt references Smith as follows, "Smith, James K. A. (2009) *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic). (2011: 546).

Reflection, for Jennifer Herdt, is useful only in the reformation of our practices (2011:543). Herdt places emphasis on the particularity of worship of God, because Scripture, church and the liturgy itself has in the past been tools of domination (2011:545). She argues (Herdt, 2011:545-546):

> There is a constant need for discernment, for holding authority accountable to God and God's purposes. There is no privileged standpoint from which this discernment is carried out: instead, we find ourselves within a web of mutual accountability and correction. So we read Scripture in the light of tradition and lived experience and in the context of worship: we celebrate and reform the liturgy in the light of Scripture, received tradition, and our efforts to be conformed to Christ in this world: individual Christians are formed within the body of the Church and go on to interrogate the structures and practices of the Church in light of their formation and experience: and Church leaders seek to discern God's will through prayerful reflection on Scripture, tradition, and their encounters with the members of the body of Christ and God's creation at large.

Jennifer Herdt regards praxis as (2011:546):

> crucial to this process: so is ongoing reflection. Discernment and wisdom are also among God's gifts to us. There is indeed a certain kind of priority of worship over other aspects of the Christian life, insofar as in worship we enact the loving response to God for which we were created and are thereby enabled to understand and love all things in relation to God's creative and redeeming love.

Liturgies as arenas for virtue enable Jennifer Herdt to argue that God can utilise "forms of "secular" virtue" (Herdt, 2012b: 431) to form Christian character. The virtue of the particular liturgy informs the participation of the agent with its context. In the instance of the Christian liturgy, the Christian narrative informs the participation of the agent. Christian worship accordingly forms the character of the Christian agent.

4.7 Conclusion

A mimetic ethic of Christian virtue allows Jennifer Herdt to bypass the legacy of anxiety over acquired virtue. In addition, she makes a substantial shift by indicating God's initiative in leading the actor of virtue toward Godself. Virtue, irrespective of whether it is a Christian or secular designation, is a platform for God's participation with humanity. The good performed through virtue serves as a progressive turn toward God. Happiness is consequently a disposition where an individual is initiated into participation with God through virtue in addition to being cognisant of the value of the virtue in itself. In this instance, the value of the action is in its contribution to the common good with the realisation that the action done finds its origin in God.

Jennifer Herdt describes her account of happiness (2012b:57):

> Happiness is found not in achieving independence but in embracing our ultimate dependency … while our final good is not fully up to us, it is something that requires our active participation: it is not something that we simply passively undergo. If virtue is the perfection of my love for God, the end of enjoyment of God cannot be fully characterized apart from my virtuous activity, my loving response to God. We find happiness in the perfected activity of receiving and returning God's gifts.

In light of the Augustinian anxiety, which does not understand virtue and happiness to be in direct relation with one another, Jennifer Herdt argues (2012b:55):

> Virtue is not the way I demonstrate to God that I am worthy of the reward of eternal life: rather, virtue proves to be nothing but the perfection of the love of God. And it is when my love to God is perfected that I can experience the union with God, which is fruition, the love of enjoyment. Virtue proves after all to be not just instrumental but partially constitutive of my happiness, of my final end … My final end is not just

> external: even though I cannot in this life fully realize that loving union with God, my loving, virtuous activity is even now an expression of the love of God.

In Jennifer Herdt's opinion, the community of faith is a forum where participation in the divine becomes concrete. Herdt refers in this regard to Hauerwas' "demystification of grace" where the act of "delving into the communal character of the Christian narrative" makes Christians "participants in God's story" (2012a:215). In Herdt's excursus on performative theology, she asks what relation Christian participation has to the idea of actors acting out scripts prescribed by an external authority (which Herdt explains could recapitulate the Augustinian anxiety[125]). Jennifer Herdt turns to Kevin Vanhoozer to answer the question[126], "Fundamentally, it (doctrine) defines our role and disciplines the imagination so that we do not simply go through the motions but really inhabit the theo-drama" (Vanhoozer in Herdt, 2012b:169).

Jennifer Herdt affirms in conclusion the adequacy of the mimetic performance (2012b:170):

> to recognize that the criterion of the adequacy of our performance is hidden in the mystery of God is also to recognize that we must not be content to look only within the church for the signs of God's grace. Creation is God's own, however fallen, and human nature as assumed in the incarnation is being redeemed by God's love in ways we cannot always fathom, for now we see through a glass darkly.

Happiness understood as enjoyment of God through mimetic performances extends the scope of virtue to also include those characteristic of the community of faith and beyond.

Happiness for Jennifer Herdt is found in the recognition that virtue is a mimetic performance through which individuals come to enjoy God. Unlike the Augustinian anxiety, she locates acquired virtue in the imitation of Christ, which affirms human agency and autonomy. The distinctively Christian character of "virtue talk" leads Herdt to affirm a progressive transformation of character which leads to salvation. Grace is the means through which acquired virtue initiates an individual into participation in God. Once participation has been established through mimetic performance, human beings come to experience happiness. The happiness experienced on earth is substantial in its own right. Unlike Augustine, who understood earthly happiness to be incomplete in its own right, Jennifer Herdt asserts that when a virtuous action is done for the sake of the value of the action itself, complete happiness is established. Reflexivity is the term used by Herdt to indicate that an individual is cognisant of the source of virtue when performing the virtue itself.

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[125]Herdt recognises the problematique inherent in such a notion and consequently purposefully discusses implication thereof for contemporary theology. Especially in light of recent developments in theology of understanding the Bible as a script that people enact (2012b:168).

[126]Jennifer Herdt engages with Kevin Vanhoozer's book *Drama of Doctrine*: "If Christians are called to perform a script, to take on a role, is there a danger that the result will be merely playacting? Vanhoozer argues: like good actors, we have to learn not simply how to play-act a role but rather to become the role we play. The drama of doctrine has nothing to do with pretending but everything to do with participating in the once-for-all mission of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. Such participation is neither play-acting nor a matter of Platonic ontology. Christian participation is rather pneumatic: those who participate in the theodramatic missions do so through union with Christ, a union that is wrought by the Spirit yet worked out in history by us. Vanhoozer rightly argues that there is no other way to become who we are called to be except by acting the part. Moreover, he perceives that this enactment is not an assertion of human agency over against divine agency, but a participation in divine agency" (Herdt, 2012b:168). Vanhoozer's book is referenced by Jennifer Herdt as, "Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *The Drama of Doctrine: A Canonical-Linguistic Approach to Christian Theology* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 2005). (2012b: 387).

Chapter 5
Happiness and human flourishing: A Continuing Conversation

5.1 Introduction

The three preceding chapters have sought to delineate the rationale of each respective author's contribution to the conversation on happiness. The title "Happiness and Human Flourishing: A Continuing Conversation" is indicative of the purpose of the chapter, to set each respective perspective in light of another. Nuances and dissonances are to be expected when bringing three voices into conversation with one another, allowing for a diversity of perspectives. From the diversity of perspectives, a rendition of happiness may be formulated that takes the voices of three female theologians into consideration.

The chapter will begin by indicating the different points of departure taken by each voice and will continue to suggest how the nuances and dissonances enrich a theological conversation on happiness. The three female voices take a similar route founded in the Christian tradition, but draw different implications for the notion of happiness. I have chosen the concept of "variegated reading" to indicate how the notion of happiness is coloured and characterised by various theological appropriations. The Merriman Webster Dictionary defines the word "variegated" as an entity marked by stripes or spots, bringing forth a diversity of colours (*Merriman Webster Dictionary*, 2013). The perspective of the female voices brings to mind a similar image when speaking about flourishing and happiness. A variety of emphases contribute to a comprehensive understanding of happiness that is grounded in theology.

In light of the growing theological conversation on God and human flourishing indicated in the God and Human Flourishing Consultations (2007 to 2013) one may return to the question: "In which ways do Serene Jones, Ellen Charry and Jennifer Herdt engage theologically with the notion of happiness and wellbeing?" A conversation on happiness from a female theological perspective is introduced by Serene Jones, who believes that one cannot talk of happiness if one has not taken into consideration the ways in which unchecked gendered patterns inform patterns of thought. Serene Jones is placed first in the conversation of three, because feminist theory asserts that any conversation held without taking into consideration the role of women is open for critique. Serene Jones as first conversation partner is helpful in her reformulation of the doctrine of justification and sanctification as forum for happiness.

Ellen Charry contributes in her conception of happiness as a way of life premised on a form of knowing God that transforms character. Ellen Charry as second voice continues from the perspective of Serene Jones by suggesting that happiness is not only determined by freedom and agency, but is also determined by the enjoyment of God. Her account shows a priority toward piety and pleasure as the means by which humans come to enjoy God, community and creation. A flourishing disposition comes through the mutual enjoyment of God and creation, coupled with the knowledge that God enjoys Godself when creation flourishes. A happy disposition is one that results from the position of flourishing.

Jennifer Herdt's priority toward the role of virtue in affirming our agency as means to relation with God marks the third voice. She understands the practicing of virtue to be an affirmation of human agency. In the instance where the virtues practiced contribute to the common good, happiness is experienced. Herdt continues from the affirmation of human agency toward a possibility of mimetic performances. A mimetic performance is an act where the agent who imitates an exemplar is transformed by the imitation. She further uses the language of agency to show how God comes in

relation to humanity through grace. As the agent is transformed by the mimetic performance, grace initiates an individual into relation with God. In the instance where imitation translates to assimilation salvation occurs progressively. Jennifer Herdt as third voice in the conversation reminds the reader that happiness is a two-part process, whereby an individual firstly experiences happiness by contributing to the common good through virtue. Secondly, the agent of virtue is progressively brought into relation with God through the imitation of Christ.

Three female voices present to the conversation theological accounts of happiness premised on the affirmation of human agency, morality and relation to God.

5.2 Grace, happiness and virtue

Serene Jones, Ellen Charry and Jennifer Herdt are three female voices who contribute to a theological conversation on happiness. The context of a conversation allows each voice to make theological affirmations with regard to happiness without negating the legitimacy of another.

Serene Jones, a Reformed feminist theologian, seeks to capture the dynamic interplay between theory and theology and thereby reformulates her understanding of doctrine and Scripture. Doctrine and Scripture serve as "normative framework" (Jones, 2000:109) from where the Christian community may understand itself in relation to God. In addition, the Christian community may critique instances of oppression in church and society (Jones, 2001a:51). A feminist critical lens is particularly useful in this regard, as it serves to critique the Church through its doctrine (Jones, 2001a:51). Jones emphasises how the Church has reinforced prescribed "norms" within society by ascribing to women particular gendered roles (2000:59). The doctrine of justification and sanctification may serve as an example where sin is often linked to the sexuality of women (Jones, 2000:94). Jones indicates how doctrine may be re-imagined in order to address oppressive logics in the construction of female identities (2002:56). In the act of re-imagining Christian doctrine, the practices of the church may be transformed to reflect a community of faith that is characterised by knowing God and in this way being formed by God's love.

Serene Jones understands the imagination to be the arena where theology is "mapped" (2002:74). The process through which the mapping takes place however, may be distorted by life negating circumstances. For this very reason, Jones opts for a "pragmatic eschatological vision" (2000:10), where grace deconstructs false natures assigned to women and provides a space where a new identity may be given (Jones, 2000:10).

Ellen Charry's theological appropriation of happiness is concerned with the divide between first-order assertions and second-order assertions, which are no longer markers of a single form of knowing God (2006a:145-147). The result of this divide is illustrated in "academic theology", where method and Christian belief no longer inform one another (Charry, 1997a:5). Key patristic thinkers are used to illustrate the illegitimacy of this divide, in particular Athanasius and Augustine, who were concerned both with truth and the effect of truth on the community of faith. It is Charry's belief that the acquisition of truth, transforms character, a process she terms salutarity (2002a:177).

The process of transformation is indistinguishable from salvation, as knowing God evokes responsiveness to Christ who is the mediator between humanity and God (Charry, 2011a:23). As character is shaped, enjoyment of life and God occurs as result. Ellen Charry affirms that "God wills the flourishing of humanity" (2011a:34) and as a result, enjoys Godself when humanity enjoys creation and God. Charry understands knowledge of God to be acquired through obedience to God's commandments. The term *asherism* denotes a lifestyle premised on the prescribed norms set out in the

Old and New Testament (Charry, 2006a:167). Happiness is consequently a way of life that is good in Ellen Charry's opinion.

Ellen Charry's emphasis on the relation between knowledge of God and the enjoyment of God stems from her attempt to reunite the division introduced in modernity between piety and pleasure. She notes (*Reflections on the interfaith Summit on Happiness*, 2010):

> The reason I concluded was that Christians are skittish to talk about happiness because some Christians perceive happiness and goodness to be in tension with one another. If Christians have a choice between being happy and being good they want to be good and they are willing to forego happiness in order to be good and obedient.

Jennifer Herdt progresses from a similar position of discomfort with false dichotomies as Ellen Charry does. She begins her account of mimetic virtue with the secularisation of moral thought. The secularisation of moral thought brought a divide between morality and its religious moorings, which Herdt deems unsatisfactory. A "Christian ethics of mimetic virtue" (Herdt, 2012b: ix) is established by Jennifer Herdt, who seeks to free talk of virtue and happiness from the theological preoccupation with acquired virtue (2012b:ix).

Jennifer Herdt makes use of the doctrine of grace to reclaim the notion that happiness understood theologically may be formed through secular virtues. Grace facilitates the process of participation in the divine through the imitation of Christ. Herdt consequently engages with Christology to transcend the divide between secular and theological. Virtue as participation in the common good, as well as in God allows her to indicate how habituation of virtuous acts transforms the agent through grace. Virtuous action has the potential of transforming the agent of virtue in its imitation of a divine example.

It is indicated in each account how happiness is constituted through relation with both God and community. Serene Jones speaks of relation with God through the doctrine of justification and sanctification, which assigns to women both agency and freedom while affirming their identity in Christ. Ellen Charry understands individuals and communities of faith to be in relation with God when they conform to God's commandments and so enjoy creation and God. A happy life is one where knowledge of God translates into a way of living. Jennifer Herdt focuses on the agency of individuals who are brought into relation with God by grace through virtue. Morality and its religious moorings are unified through the imitation of a divine example. Herdt consequently understands relation with God to take place when individuals are assimilated to God

In light of the varied points of departure for speaking of happiness, one might ask how each account contributes to the theological conversation on happiness. By starting with Serene Jones, the theological emphasis falls on flourishing as a position where Christ affirms the agency and freedom of women. Grace enables women to live according to an identity ascribed to them in the Christian redemptive narrative. Jones' reformulation of the doctrine of justification and sanctification illustrates this affirmation.

The doctrine of justification and sanctification provides an eschatological vision of women's nature, where grace functions as an envelope which holds the substance of women (Jones, 2000:64). Accordingly, justification and sanctification are two different markers of a single self, deconstructing an individual while simultaneously presenting it with a new identity (Jones, 2000:63, 64). Serene Jones describes each accordingly as freedom and form (2000:63). The narratives in Scripture are instances where the dual act of undoing and re-making captures the imagination of the reader and

presents to the reader an alternative reality (Jones, 2001c:301). Jones describes the process of undoing and re-making as one which expands the imaginistic economies of the reader where the alternate reality presented is one devoid of oppression (2001c:301). In instances of oppression, grace enables women to re-imagine their lives in accordance with the alternative reality presented in Christ. When women come to understand their identity as premised in Christ, new patterns of thought are erected in their lives.

The habits of thought presented in the doctrine of justification and sanctification transform the way women know God. "Knowing" for Serene Jones is a deeply involved position termed by her as "embodied and embodying" (2008b:202). She understands the Reformed "habit of thought" to be "deeply engaged, self-involving, and a trusting form of knowledge- the knowledge of faith" (Jones, 2000:56) which leads women into "experiencing the joy of life abundant in God" (Jones, 2002:56). Of particular significance is Jones' approach to doctrine, "when I open this world of doctrine to students, I try to show them what that imaginative world consists of by teaching them habituated thought-patterns that Christians have devised over the centuries to structure the deep faith play of mind that comprise the terms of their engagement with the world" (Jones2008b:199).

Reformed habits of thought allow Serene Jones to think of grace as a catalyst for flourishing, whereby women take on an identity that counters the identity given by cultural norms. Grace defines the nature of women "according to the grace-given virtues of the Christian life: faith, hope, and love" (Jones, 2000:65). Flourishing as a disposition of happiness "is an existential position wherein grace captures the emancipatory vision of women. Grace then, embodies flourishing, through its containment of God's love and vision for women. 'Graced' becomes her new identity" (Jones, 2000:64) as Christ reveals God's gracious love in God's "life, death, and resurrection" (Jones, 2000:65). Accordingly, Jones deduces that "God wills the flourishing of all people" (2000:108) and draws the attention of the reader to the alternative reality presented in redemption (Jones, 2000:110).

The reality presented in redemption applies not only to an individual, but also to the church, a graced community. The graced community envision a space free of oppression where it is both "a "sacramental embodiment" of grace and "witness to grace" (Jones, 2000:175). A theological perspective on happiness for Serene Jones begins and ends with grace which "comes outside the normative framework of sin and oppression" (2000:110) and provides the community of faith with a pragmatic eschatological orientation.

Ellen Charry locates happiness in a particular way of knowing God that is salutary (1998b:379). Salutarity presupposes a form of knowing that is transformative in nature. The distinction between the rational and "spiritual" is negated by Charry in order to establish the transformative power that knowledge has on character. She locates the source of knowledge of God in doctrine and Scripture (Charry, 2002a:177), which is the theoretical framework wherein humans come to know God. In the revelation of Godself to humanity through Christ, knowledge is understood to be salvific in nature. Individuals are consequently invited to participate in God through the sacraments and obedience to God's commandments. Co-optation in the "salvific drama" encourages participants to be concerned for the flourishing of creation.

Ellen Charry understands participation in God to have theological implications. She indicates (Charry, 2010:262-263):

> Those co-opted into the drama of redemption have no choice but to embrace their providential responsibility energetically, for they have become servants of the world's flourishing and of God's

> enjoyment of creation. Their happiness is in enjoying God and the world as servants. Enjoying eternal life is doing this excellently and energetically.

Ellen Charry's emphasis falls on the flourishing of creation because she believes that God enjoys Godself when creation flourishes. When creation flourishes and God flourishes, happiness is experienced by an individual. The reality of suffering in life probes Charry to find an understanding of happiness that is a state of being instead of an emotion.

Jennifer Herdt engages with the notion of happiness in the secularisation of moral thought exacerbated by the Augustinian anxiety of acquired virtue (2012b:1). The secularisation of moral thought erected a dichotomy between morality and its religious moorings, which leads to the separation of truth and goodness. She reinforces the illegitimacy of this divide in her conviction that the goodness experienced through virtue is a means by which God takes the initiative to be in relation with humanity. Virtue consequently progressively brings an individual into a relationship with God. Understood theologically, virtue is an expression of love for God that evokes enjoyment of God (understood as ultimate happiness). The dichotomy erected through the secularisation of morality is negated by Herdt because it restricts God's initiative to inaugurate individuals into relationship with God through secular virtues.

Herdt affirms her conviction by reiterating Hauerwas' shift in emphasis (when speaking of virtue) from the action to the agent doing the action (Hauerwas, 1985 in Herdt, 2012a:207). In answer to the dilemma of acquired virtue, she sets virtue in the context of the Christian liturgy. Christians are co-opted into the Christian narrative through the sacraments. In this way, virtuous actions performed are irreducibly linked to Christian character premised on faith in God (Herdt, 2012a:215). Virtuous action as participation in the divine is an act characterised by the enjoyment of God.

In an Augustinian rendition of eudaimonism Jennifer Herdt describes how participation in the divine, premised on a relationship with God, results in happiness (2012b:57):

> Happiness is found not in achieving independence but in embracing our ultimate dependency … while our final good is not fully up to us, it is something that requires our active participation: it is not something that we simply passively undergo. If virtue is the perfection of my love for God, the end of enjoyment of God cannot be fully characterized apart from my virtuous activity, my loving response to God. We find happiness in the perfected activity of receiving and returning God's gifts.

Grace is central to the acquisition of virtue, as it enables exemplification and participation in God (Herdt, 2012b:431). Moreover, through grace God may utilise secular virtues to transform Christian character (Herdt, 2012b:431). Jennifer Herdt returns to Aristotelian eudaimonism and describes how the imitation of a divine exemplar may become a foundation from which virtuous actions transform character. Through the transformation of character, Christians participate in the goodness of God, an act effectively bridging the gap between the Augustinian anxiety toward semblance and the secularisation of moral thought. When Christians are assimilated to Christ, virtuous actions are performed for the sake of the virtues themselves. Happiness becomes, in Herdt's opinion, a state of virtuous acting where the truth of God's goodness and moral thought coincides to direct us toward the common good.

Present in each conceptualisation of happiness lies a unique point of departure and rationale. One may understand the variety of perspectives as enriching to the conversation on happiness. Serene Jones with her particular emphasis on the role of grace in ascribing a new identity to women, Ellen Charry in her understanding that happiness is marked both by piety and pleasure as enjoyment of God and

Jennifer Herdt who understands virtue to be the means through which God brings humanity into relation with Godself.

5.3 A variegated reading

The Merriman Webster Dictionary defines the word "variegated" as an entity marked by stripes or spots, bringing forth a diversity of colours (*Merriman Webster Dictionary*, 2013). A variety of emphases contribute to a comprehensive understanding of happiness that is grounded in theology. In light of the different appropriations of happiness, one may proceed to delineate the rationale of each voice highlighting similarities along the way. If one were to categorise the thought of each voice based on a stipulated rationale five processes would be distinguishable.

The first process is the identification of an unsatisfactory disposition or dilemma that is characteristically insufficient in describing a preferred norm. The second describes the implications of such a dilemma while suggesting an alternative. The process of establishing the preconditions for an alternative signals the third process, which is accompanied by the fourth in its exposition of the suggested alternative. The fifth and final process is the appropriation of the alternative to the desired norm.

The first process, *the identification of an unsatisfactory disposition or dilemma that is characteristically insufficient in describing a preferred norm* is worked out by each voice as follows:

Serene Jones addresses the gendered roles women are given described in terms of "natures" or "essences". These assigned natures, if oppressive, negate the flourishing of women by disordering their imaginations. A disordered imagination represents an individual who is unable to receive God's redemptive narrative as alternative identity. An identity that is counter to God's will that creation should flourish (Jones, 2000:64).

Ellen Charry locates the unsatisfactory disposition within academic theology and its inability to transition between normative truths and salutary knowledge of God. The "academizing" of theology was representative of a greater divide between pleasure and piety (Charry, 2010: xii), which left "a theological gap between goodness and happiness" (Charry, 2010: xii). There are moral implications to human relation with God for Charry. When reading Athanasius, she (Charry, 1993a:268) argues:

> Happiness, that is, the capacity to direct human life aright, was buried, lost, and forgotten through generations of fumbling around in the dark. The good life, that is the virtuous life, was trashed beneath indignities that misused body, mind, and soul. The process began by forgetting who God is. This led to losing touch with who we really are: creatures destined for happiness at the hands of the one who created us. This loss led to idolatry which in turn destroyed human dignity, and turned human intercourse into a jungle of violence, corruption, and deceit. In short, civilization was on the verge of collapse. And God saw that it was not good at all.

Jennifer Herdt, with a similar awareness of the moral implication of happiness, turns her attention to the secularisation of moral thought (2001a:259). The secularisation of morality brings her into conversation with history to understand how moral thought was influenced by conceptions of virtue and the ultimate good (Herdt, 2012b:24). The secularisation of moral thought presupposed a divide between virtuous action as form of participation in God (ultimate happiness) and virtuous action for the sake of nobility and the common good (Herdt, 2012b:97). The Augustinian anxiety of acquired virtue as semblance becomes an opportune moment for Herdt to facilitate a reading of virtue where moral thought and theological implications need not be two different normative frameworks.

Jennifer Herdt asks in which ways virtue may be conceptualised for it to be defined by participation in the divine (Cudworth, 1996 in Herdt, 1999:47). Another way of asking the question would be to inquire to what extent "infused virtue" and "acquired virtue" (categories which no longer suffice in Herdt's recollection) merge into a form of acting that addresses the agent instead of the action. The virtuous individual comes to know God through assimilation to Christ, where virtue is the first step toward knowledge of God and self.

Serene Jones and Jennifer Herdt identify *the unsatisfactory disposition* in the negation of human agency, whereas the emphasis of Ellen Charry falls on the divide between goodness and happiness. Jones argues that the agency of women is negated when doctrine and Scripture are read with insensitivity to gendered constructions of women's nature. Insensitivity to gendered constructions when reading doctrine and Scripture may be oppressive to women. Herdt in turn problematises the exacerbated Augustinian anxiety of acquired virtue, as it shifted the emphasis from the agent of virtue to the action itself. By turning the attention to the action itself, virtue was no longer understood as means by which God initiated an individual into relation with Godself.

Ellen Charry argues that creation is destined to be happy. Modernity established a divide between goodness and happiness however, which shifted the theological emphasis from enjoyment of God to goodness. The prioritisation of piety over pleasure is problematic for Charry as it distanced Christians from the belief that enjoyment of God inculcated both goodness and happiness. Premised on the discrepancies identified by each voice one may consider the *implications of the dilemmas presented.*

One may continue to the second process where the three female voices describe *the implications of such a dilemma while suggesting an alternative*:

Serene Jones' discomfort lies in the belief that doctrine and Scripture, which communicate a particular knowledge of God, has been subverted by false interpretations presented in the Reformed tradition. Knowledge of God that is oppressive underscores a redemptive narrative that is irreconcilable to women. Women who are at risk of not being able to relate to the saving power of God are "without a story to initiate" (Jones, 2000: 63) them "into grace" (Jones, 2000:63). As a result of the fact that knowledge of God shapes the imaginations of individuals, false construals may be life negating. Jones deems the absence of saving knowledge of God unsatisfactory. Instead of rejecting the Reformed tradition altogether, she seeks to show how doctrine and Scripture may be re-imagined to establish a knowledge of God that is life enhancing.

Ellen Charry's concern lay with the distinction made between knowledge and wisdom. Knowledge and wisdom divorced from one another render knowledge of God void of its salutary effect. In light of Charry's emphasis on happiness as a way of life established through a particular way of knowing God, the divide between knowledge and wisdom establishes a rendition of happiness that is unintelligible to Christians. The result is an abstraction of the human relation to God along with an understanding of happiness that is devoid of its transformative potential. Charry accordingly suggests that knowledge and wisdom be understood as an unified whole. When wisdom and knowledge are unified, happiness marks both our knowledge of God and leads us into wisdom as means of living a good life.

Jennifer Herdt seeks to circumvent the problematic separation of morality from its religious moorings (Whichcote, 1996 in Herdt, 2001a:259), which does not recognise God's initiative in bringing humanity into relation with Godself through virtues. She suggests the emphasis of virtue be re-placed onto the agent doing the action instead of the action itself. When the emphasis is placed on the agent, morality and its religious moorings need no longer be separate entities. Unification is enabled by

Herdt, who introduces grace as means through which virtuous action bespeaks the agent. Virtuous action, by means of grace, becomes participation in the divine through the imitation of Christ (Herdt, 2012b:47).

Serene Jones brings it to the attention of the reader that interpretation of doctrine and Scripture is potentially oppressive if it does not take into consideration the way women's roles have been constructed in the past. Life-negating readings of Scripture are unable to provide women with a redemptive narrative that draws them into relation with God. The implications are the inability to come into relation with God in addition to the absence of affirming women's agency and freedom. Jones indicates an alternative way of reading doctrine and Scripture by arguing for the role of grace in affirming the agency and freedom of women.

Ellen Charry understands the notion of *asherism* to be negated when wisdom and knowledge of God are separated. This is problematic because knowledge of God when separated from wisdom is not understood to translate into an excellent way of living life. Because happiness is established both by living excellently and as a result enjoying Godself and creation, the separation of knowledge of God and wisdom negates a comprehensive understanding of happiness. Charry suggests an alternative reading through obedience to God's commandments. Obedience to God's commandments establishes both knowledge of God and enables an excellent way of living life. When individuals conform to God's standard for living, knowledge is conveyed of God that is salutary.

Jennifer Herdt takes issue with the separation of morality from its religious moorings because it does not take into consideration how human beings can progressively come to participate in the divine through virtue. The inability to understand virtue as forum where the agent is transformed through the imitation of a divine exemplar impoverishes the concept of virtue. Herdt provides an alternative by arguing that virtues by means of grace are means through which human progressively come into relation with Godself. Morality cannot, therefore, be separated from its religious moorings, because it would imply a distinction between "secular" and "Christian" virtues as two distinct liturgies. By placing the emphasis on the unification of morality with its religious moorings, Jennifer Herdt shifts the focus from the action to the agent doing the action. When the focus falls on the agent, grace is able to initiate individuals into relation with God.

Each respective voice has indicated the implications of the unsatisfactory disposition and the alternative sought. One may continue to delineate the *preconditions for an alternative*.

The third process establishes *preconditions for a suggested alternative*. In the instance of the three female theological voices it is an understanding of God that transforms the individual through a stipulated form of knowledge. Whereas Jennifer Herdt understands virtue (as a form of imitating a divine example) to communicate a particular knowledge of God to the agent, Serene Jones and Ellen Charry begin their inquiry from the presupposition that one can come to know God through doctrine and Scripture.

Ellen Charry describes doctrine as the normative framework by which individuals come to discern God's goodness, wisdom and beauty (2002c:114). The knowledge of God, presented to individuals through theology, combined with God's goodness evokes a transformation in character that shapes readers for the good life (Charry, 1997a:viii-ix). Scripture captures the imagination of its readers through its redemptive narrative while presenting to the reader knowledge of God previously foreign to self. Charry describes how the imagination is captured through the redemptive narrative (1997a:185):

> The reflective reader will be led to self-examination by Christ's virtues, by both love and the righteousness of God, and by the power of God as well as the anger of God, because an example has been set before her, a man lifted up upon a cross, who willingly gave his innocent life that she might be spared.

Serene Jones affirms the acquisition of knowledge of God as result of an embodying and embodied reading of Scripture. It is embodying and embodied (Jones, 2002:56) because Scripture exerts formative pressure on its reader whilst enfolding the identity of the reader through grace. The imagination is co-opted into the redemptive narrative through identification with justification and sanctification. As the imagination is re-orientated toward God, habits of thought are formed through doctrine (Jones, 2002:56). These habits of thought translate into forms of "knowing" that lead to "experiencing the joy of life abundant in God" (Jones, 2002:56). The effect is a "deeply engaged, self-involving, and trusting form of knowledge- the knowledge of faith" (Jones, 2000:56) and must therefore be revisited at every instance of re-imagining (Jones, 2000:56).

Jennifer Herdt turns to an imaginative grasp of Christian character as premise for living a virtuous life. Similar to Serene Jones and Ellen Charry, the imagination partakes in liturgies where the imitation of Christ co-opts individuals into the redemptive narrative (Herdt, 2012a:215). Virtue consequently gains transcendent meaning, as it enacts the truth and goodness of God depicted in liturgies of faith. For this enactment, reflexivity is required. Herdt describes a disposition of reflexivity as a conscious awareness in the agent of the value intrinsic to the particular form of action (2012b: 41).

Ellen Charry, Jennifer Herdt and Serene Jones each understands knowledge of God to be acquired through co-optation in the redemptive narrative. The *precondition for the suggested alternatives* is knowledge of God that transforms the way human beings come to understand themselves in relation to God. Charry believes knowledge of God to be attained when Christians partake in the norm for excellent living stipulated in the Old Testament and New Testament. An *asherist* life is one where the co-opted individual partakes in God's redemption by living life excellently. Through the realisation of knowledge of God through excellent living, creation affirms its priority toward the flourishing of both God and creation.

Jennifer Herdt speaks similarly of co-optation in the redemptive narrative through an imaginative grasp of virtue. An imaginative grasp of virtue is a position where the agent is consciously aware of the value of the virtue being done. Virtue, understood as the imitation of a divine exemplar, conveys knowledge of God, which progressively brings an individual into relation with God. Grace serves as the catalyst between virtue and progressive participation in the divine. The role of grace in enabling an individual to come into relation with God is similarly underscored by Serene Jones. Jones' priority lies in the role of grace to affirm the identity of women as both justified and sanctified. Once women have understood themselves as justified and sanctified, their habits of thought are changed. Changed habits of thought establish knowledge of God that is both liberative and emancipatory.

Co-optation into the redemptive narrative serves not only to present salvation to individuals, but also to transform the way human beings understand themselves in relation to God. Once each account has established the preconditions for a suggested alternative, one may continue to *exposit the nature of the alternative sought.*

The fourth process presents an *exposition of the suggested alternatives*. Each respective voice indicates how theology is implicated in a reading of happiness. Jennifer Herdt remarks on the distinctively Christian character of virtue in theology (Herdt, 2012a:215):

> Crucially, Christians cannot understand responsibility for character in the way that Aristotle does: virtue is not a matter of acquiring skills or excellences that allow us to flourish as instantiations of human nature, but a matter of becoming a follower of Jesus … We are to be made participants in God's story, not authors of our own.

Participation in the redemptive narrative is a perspective delineated by each voice in a different way. In each instance, the role of grace is implicated in the imitation of and participation in the divine. Serene Jones uses the language of performance to indicate how women may take part in the redemptive drama and be transformed by their participation. The process begins with the doctrine of justification and sanctification which assign to women a different identity. Jones states (2000:58):

> Standing in the space of sanctification, the one whose identity has been "undone" and "forgiven" is now given normative contours, disciplines, laws, and ethical directives within which to become a concretely new person in Christ.

Grace enables identification with Christ in Christ's suffering and earthly ministry, which is transformative in nature. In the presence of the community of faith, sacraments become a communal enactment of the redemptive drama. Serene Jones indicates how this enactment evokes practices that shape the "becoming" of women (2002:75). Grace as active entity that bring individuals into salvation through performance, resonates thematically with Jennifer Herdt's emphasis on mimesis (2012b:60). Herdt writes (2012b: 119):

> Grace is active in our acting, in the beauty of virtue displayed that engages and transforms our affections, allowing us to play a part that becomes our own as we play it. While imitation is an act, there is also a chastening of human agency implied in the cascade. We must be inspired by our exemplars: we cannot simply decide to love them, to find them beautiful.

The Augustinian anxiety is overcome in the recognition that grace transforms human agency through virtuous acting. By participating in the divine through virtuous action, human beings come to partake in God's goodness by responding to grace, an act denoting salvation (Herdt, 2012b:60).

Ellen Charry understands the role of grace as enabling a particular form of knowing God that is transformative in nature (2006a:167). In addition to its facilitation of good knowledge in the knower, grace is the source by which humans come to participate in God (Charry, 1993a: 273). In light of Charry's emphasis on knowledge of God that evokes enjoyment and happiness, grace reveals Christ to individuals who are being transformed by their knowledge of God (2010:262-263).

Jennifer Herdt, Serene Jones and Ellen Charry understand participation in the divine to be enabled by grace. Grace in the instance of Herdt enables virtuous action to be a loving response between agent and God. Through virtuous action, the agent is transformed and initiated into relationship with God. The imitation of Christ is a mimetic performance whereby Christians partake in the liturgy of the redemptive narrative. In the instance of Charry, grace directs our obedience to God. The norm prescribed by God in the Old Testament and New Testament becomes a norm for excellent living whereby God is understood to partake in the enjoyment of creation. By imitating the norms prescribed by God, human beings are assimilated to Christ and accordingly partake in God. Jones uses the language of performance to indicate how grace transforms the actor taking part in the redemptive drama. The doctrine of justification and sanctification presents to women new identities. Once women partake in God by assuming the part of one who is justified and sanctified, grace gives agency and freedom to women. Women are transformed by their performance in Christ, which is pleasing to God.

Grace as the catalyst for imitation of Christ, assigns to women an identity they may perform and enables individuals to live life excellently for the enjoyment of God. The role of grace becomes the means by which each voice *appropriates the alternative suggested to the desired norm.*

In the fifth and final process, the three female voices continue to *appropriate the alternative suggested to a desired norm.* In the context of a theological engagement with the notion of happiness, Serene Jones, Ellen Charry and Jennifer Herdt turn to liturgy and the sacraments. Liturgy is a reminder of the communal nature of Christian identity through a communal identification and re-enactment of Christ's ministry. Herdt indicates the need for an "imaginative grasp of the whole form of life in which one's own activity participates" (2011:537). Moreover, the recognition of humans as "embodied creatures" allows one to see how the ""private" mental lives" of individuals "are inhabited by communal symbols and images and narratives" (Herdt, 2011:537). In the first instance, Christian worship deeply forms the moral imagination (Herdt, 2011:541), while also forming virtues (Herdt, 2011:537).

Co-optation in the redemptive narrative through the sacraments, argues Ellen Charry, dresses the believer "in the vestments of salvation, the armour of God. Assimilating salvation into our personalities requires developing a new outlook on things and strategies for accomplishing them…" (2010:262-263). Talk of participation in the divine and imitation of Christ are linked to the restoration of human dignity by acquiring a new identity in Christ. Each appropriation of human dignity is read differently in light of the particular emphasis on redemption. For Jennifer Herdt, acquiring an identity which is constitutive of Christian character through virtue is a gradual process brought to fruition in Christian practices. Jennifer Herdt states (2012b:350):

> On this view, it is not through an instantaneous evangelical rebirth, a lightning bolt from heaven, that Christian are made such, but through hearing Scriptures that proclaim the story of God with us and participating in the practices of the church constituted by its willingness to be defined by that story. Christian identity is thus formed gradually, in time, by forces that are embodied and open to view-narratives, institutions, practices.

Jennifer Herdt's account of Christian identity finds expression in the transformative potential of virtuous action when such virtuous action is directed toward God through imitation of Christ (2012b:47). The same is not the case for either Ellen Charry or Serene Jones, who understand Christian identity to be restored through a therapeutic soteriology. Charry's starting point is that of a broken image of God. Founded upon Athanasian Christology, "human dignity comes from our relatedness to God, as given by God in creation" (Charry, 1997a:90). Bad knowledge of God and suffering distort the image of God in humanity, which necessitates redemption. A therapeutic soteriology provides the forum where human dignity may be restored. Charry writes (2001:127):

> Christian therapy is emancipation from the distortions of the self to which all persons are liable. It begins with realizing that the source of one's proper dignity and nobility is God and no one or nothing else. Dignity and nobility are found in coming to understand God and in coming to see oneself as an echo of the Trinity.

Serene Jones takes a similar approach to Ellen Charry by indicating how Christian identity is bestowed on women who participate in the redemptive narrative. Doctrine forms the conceptual arena wherein women may acquire an identity or nature that is free from oppression (Jones, 2009: 13). In her book, *Trauma and Grace* (2009), Jones indicates how the redemptive narrative captures the imagination of its participants (2009:13). Through grace, individuals come to realise the part they are to play, which transforms them and bestows a new nature on them. Serene Jones shows how natures

that are ascribed to individuals can either enhance or negate flourishing. She illustrates in her caricature whom she calls "Rachel"[127] (Jones, 2004a: 281-283):

> Maybe standing there, Rachel is able to catch a glimpse of grace, a fleeting hint of redemption, a sense of the hope that long ago faded … What kind of grace is capable of meeting her loss?" The crucified Christ communicates this grace, "*Prevenient* - and *enhancing grace"* that "bears the double mark of being at once a new freely bestowed, externally composed gift and a deeply familiar, intimately known presence- a grace both foreign and indigenous to us. The glory of Christ lies in a particular form of love, "It has no corollary … It simply is the truth of that moment, in all its inexhaustible particularity.

Human dignity is affirmed when women take on a new identity established by their performance in the redemptive narrative. Serene Jones' approach to soteriology is therapeutic in its ability to meet and re-order a disordered imagination due to trauma and suffering. The re-ordering takes place as women partake in a divine script set out by doctrine (Jones, 2009:46). Freedom is evoked when woman may "perform" (Jones, 2000:67) "an identity that is not ours by right but is a gift" (Jones, 2000:67). Serene Jones explains (2000: 60-62):

> When one is sanctified, one performs and is performed by the script of divine love that comes to us in Jesus Christ, a script mediated to us ecclesially … This script … is not just something that Christians learn to enact. Rather, as the very context within which we become who we are, it is the script of our most fundamental selves. As such, when we perform and are performed by grace, our lives take on the form that we are. In this manner justification provides women with "freedom" to live.

The desired norm expressed by each theological account pertains to the unique relation of human beings to God. In each instance, relation to God grounds a theological account of human flourishing and happiness. Serene Jones, whose account one may term "graced agency," seeks to illustrate how grace is constitutive of a women's identity as both free and agentic. Graced agency depicts the performance of a woman who participates in the redemptive narrative as one who has been redeemed and liberated. Graced agency furthermore describes women who flourish as a result of their new agentic identity. Performances are a means by which women express their new agentic identity in relation to God, because God wills the flourishing of women and their performances are pleasing to God.

Ellen Charry's account may be termed "happy." Charry illustrates how goodness and happiness cannot be dichotomised. Instead, grace enables an excellent life through conformance to God's commandments. An excellent life is enjoyable to humanity as they flourish and enable creation to flourish. Mutual enjoyment of God and creation occur as result of the flourishing of creation and establishes a disposition of being *ashrey. Asherism* is a term which denotes, for Ellen Charry, an obedient life marked by both goodness and happiness. Goodness is established through obedience to God's norms, while happiness is the result of a good life. Happiness understood as an obedient, excellent life, functions independent of the pain and suffering experienced in life. The state of being happy is therefore not an emotional state, but rather a state of being.

Jennifer Herdt's account centers in virtue and may thus be understood as an account of "virtue." Virtue as imitation of Christ's divine exemplar is understood to bring humanity progressively into relation with God by means of grace. Herdt terms this imitation a mimetic performance. Similar to

[127]In her book, *Trauma and Grace* (2009), Serene Jones describes the context of an individual whom she names Rachel: "She is a woman who has been undone by traumatic violence: her spirit fractured by that mythic event the Christian tradition has named "the Slaughter of the Innocents" (2004a:270).

Serene Jones' account of performances, virtue as mimetic performance assimilates individual to Christ and so enables participation in the divine. Virtues bespeak the agent who is in relation to God, affirming the distinctively Christian liturgy they are partaking in.

Relation to Godself is enabled by grace through imitation, obedience and performances.

5.4 Converging conversations

The process of identifying nuances and dissonances within the rationale of each female theological voice has established a creative space where each female voice may be read in light of the other. The delineation of the five processes of thinking about God and human flourishing has served as introduction to a converging conversation. A converging conversation is a meeting place where each respective voice has the opportunity to address the accomplishments and shortcomings of another's perspective.

Serene Jones, Ellen Charry and Jennifer Herdt illustrate the complex nature of happiness by developing different accounts, each with a distinctive priority toward a theological understanding of happiness. For Charry, happiness is an enduring state where Christians live in the presence of God and thereby enjoy God and God creation (2012a: 229). For Jones, happiness is graced agency, an identity marked by both freedom and form (2002:69). For Herdt, happiness is discussed as part and parcel of a virtuous life lived in participation with God through the imitation of Christ (Whichcote, 1996 in Herdt, 2001a:259). Each voice respectively understands human happiness to imply the flourishing of creation through relation with God. When happiness is dependent on one's relation with God, an uncommodified rendition of happiness is attested to. Accordingly, happiness becomes an active presence that reminds individuals of their Christian identity.

One may pose the question to the conversation whether each perspective is comprehensive enough in its consideration of happiness.

It is useful to start with Serene Jones, who employs a feminist critical lens when engaging with Scripture and doctrine (2001c:299). In the past, doctrine and Scripture have been used in an oppressive way, which is deeply troubling for Jones, as it reinforces an oppressive logic often found in the church and society. A feminist critical lens is useful in this regard, as it draws the attention of the reader to any life negating interpretation. Moreover, by assuming a critical disposition any normative framework that goes unchecked is reason for analysis (Jones, 2001c:299). As a result, the reading of doctrine and Scripture becomes the primary concern for re-imagining a graced agency. Graced agency describes a reality where women may be defined by an identity other than an oppressive one. Serene Jones turns her attention to the Reformed tradition with the intent on re-formulating doctrine. An example of such a reformulation is the doctrine of justification and sanctification, which ascribes to women both freedom and form.

In the instance where women experience oppression, flourishing is negated (Jones, 2002:56). The feminist critical lens applied to doctrine is by way of deduction also applied to happiness. Serene Jones' use of flourishing substantiates a reading of happiness where agency is affirmed and oppression negated (2004a:260). Life negating circumstances include any instance where the imagination is disordered as a result of trauma and suffering (Jones, 2009:155). Understood in light of Serene Jones' precondition for flourishing (that agency be affirmed and oppression negated), happiness becomes a disposition that results from a position of flourishing. This perspective is representative of the greater corpus of liberation theology, which seeks the emancipation of the oppressed and marginalised premised on a theological anthropology.

Ellen Charry's construction of happiness indicates a possible shortcoming in Serene Jones' priority toward the absence of oppression and the affirmation of agency. Charry describes the reason for her pursuit of happiness as the untimely death of her husband (2010: ix). The answer to her inquiry came in her consideration of the patristic tradition, doctrine and Scripture. Happiness is described in terms of *asherism* (Charry, 2003a:39). A term denoting a life of obedience lived in the presence of God, where mutual enjoyment between God and humanity occur (Charry, 2011a:240). As a result, creation flourishes and God enjoys Godself as a result.

Ellen Charry skilfully transcends the notion of happiness present in Serene Jones' conceptualisation, by situating happiness in mutual enjoyment of God and creation. Of significance is that Charry assigns the disposition of being happy to God as a result of human flourishing and enjoyment of creation. Happiness in light of her appropriation serves as a sign that reminds individuals of their participation in the divine, a reality that functions independent of suffering (Charry, 2006a:167). In contrast to Serene Jones, Ellen Charry understands a disposition of flourishing to be one where an identity is affirmed through obedience to a prescribed norm (1993a:273).

One may continue with Serene Jones' therapeutic soteriology, which underscores her theological motivation for flourishing. Premised on her feminist critical lens doctrine is reformulated to construct an alternative identity for women (Jones, 2000: 55). The means through which doctrine is re-formulated lies in the way Jones understands the imagination. The imagination is the forum where daily reality and doctrine meet and influence one another. Per implication, this means that when an oppressive logic resides in one's interpretation of doctrine, the way life is lived is influenced and flourishing is negated. It is for this very reason that doctrine is re-imagined at every instance of it being read (Jones, 2002:56). Jones continues to indicate how, through deep identification, the dramatic nature of the redemptive narrative transforms the imagination where oppression has disrupted it (2002:56). The process of re-imagining occurs in the participation of the onlooker in the redemptive drama. Jesus' resurrection and ascension provides a dramatically different ending to the trauma and suffering known by its onlookers (Jones, 2002: 124).

A new interpretive reality is introduced through the process of identification with the cross, whereby the imagination is re-ordered. The act of re-ordering is therapeutic for Serene Jones and exists within the salvific framework of the cross. Jones's understanding of flourishing is premised on a therapeutic soteriology, which requires the participation of the onlooker. She uses the language of performance to indicate how the onlooker engages with the redemptive narrative. The individual takes part in the act of deep identification with the cross, a process denoting performance. As each individual takes on a particular role in the redemptive drama, a different identity is given to them (Jones, 2004a: 281-282). The alternative identity becomes the participants own, establishing transformation as the role is enacted (Jones, 2009:124).

The Augustinian anxiety of habituation into virtue presents a possible dilemma in the use of the language of performance (Herdt, 2012b:24), as it does not distinguish between semblance and truth. Augustine's concern lay at this very point, when and if performance became reality. Jennifer Herdt describes this Augustinian anxiety as an anxiety toward the possibility that modes of "putting on" virtue remained only that, a process of "putting on" that never proceeded into transformation (2012b:24).

Parallel to the Augustinian anxiety, one may ask Serene Jones whether the act of performing a particular part is sufficient in evoking a transformation of character. Jones employs the language of performance to affirm the agency of women but lacks the implication for character in her

conceptualisation of performance. The language of performance she uses has two negative interpretive possibilities. The first is that acting the part in a salvific drama does not necessarily imply a transformation of character. The second, in the instance where transformation occurs as result of acting the part, reflexivity is not guaranteed. This is illustrated by Jennifer Herdt in the instance where a child does a good deed and is transformed by it, but does not necessarily grasp the value of the act in itself (2012b:30).

Serene Jones makes an important contribution to the conversation on happiness and flourishing by equipping the reader with a critical lens in the analysis of the human condition. Happiness is conceived as a result of a position of flourishing. Ellen Charry and Jennifer Herdt contribute respectively to the position taken by Jones. Happiness in light of Ellen Charry's appropriation must function independent from the lived realities of individuals. Moreover, happiness is a way of life that affirms one's participation in the divine (Charry, 1993a:273). Happiness as result of flourishing in the case of Serene Jones is potentially short sighted, as it is dependent on an account of happiness where gendered constructions are negated. A context-dependent understanding of happiness is a fluid concept dependent on a subjective state. She alludes to the fluidity of flourishing in her statement (Jones, 2000:75):

> In previous chapters, I stressed the importance of having in feminist theory a bold vision of what life without oppression might be like- a vision I referred to as feminist theory's "eschatological moment"… My opening definition of oppression invoked this vision by referring to "the flourishing of women." As I have explained, this vision functions as a yardstick against which the pains of the present are measured and critiqued. In theories of oppression, this measurement serves as a "regulative ideal,"…Articulating this vision is challenging because it is always in a state of flux. Women's flourishing means something different to my Tuesday-night group than it meant to the first women's group that gathered in the church in 1772.

Serene Jones' conception of happiness accords with an emancipatory vision presented in liberation theologies and as such, is concerned with the flourishing of women. Jennifer Herdt in turn, within the context of the theological conversation, may be understood to comment on Jones' use of the language of performance in which is restrictive in its conceptualisation of the role of the agent. The implication is that the one acting the part may not realise the transcendent value of the part being played. The act of partaking in the redemptive narrative establishes happiness momentarily if transformation does not occur. Herdt's conception of happiness is helpful, as its emphasis falls on both the agent and the action being done (2012b:31-32). Happiness becomes, for Jennifer Herdt, an active presence in the agent of virtue whereby grace comes and transforms the individual (2012b:119). An important addition is made to Serene Jones' understanding of happiness by considering the possibility that happiness may already be present in the lived realities of individuals.

Serene Jones as first voice in the conversation introduces a critical disposition when talking about the flourishing of individuals. As a feminist theologian, she believes that theology cannot be divorced from the lived realities of individuals. Instead, a feminist critical position challenges any construction of happiness that does not take suffering and trauma into consideration. Jones' voice inaugurates a discussion of happiness that is deeply critical of the shaping potential of doctrine and Scripture.

Ellen Charry, as a female theologian with a pastoral intent, contributes to the theme of God and happiness by negating the theological gap between goodness and pleasure. Charry's emphasis falls on the concrete practices implicated in the notion of *asherism* (1997a:5). As second voice in the conversation, she transitions from Serene Jones' feminist critical lens toward a form of happiness that has God and creation enjoy another. By implicating God's enjoyment and happiness in human

conceptions of happiness, a transcendent dimension is given to happiness. In addition, happiness no longer pertains only to the self but always to the self in relation to God. Knowledge of God extends beyond identification to a form of knowing that is transformational in character.

The particularity of Christian happiness is established by Ellen Charry, who understands participation in the divine to be salvific (2006a:167). An *asherist* disposition is one where participation in the divine grounds an individual in the goodness and truth of God, as well as the greater community of faith (Charry, 2010: 193). The normative framework for a happy life is found in the act of obedience exemplified in the Old Testament and New Testament (Charry, 2010: 193-194). The condition for being *ashrey* functions independent from life's circumstances and symbolises a state of being that finds its source outside of human reality. A certain security is harboured in this perspective, where the precondition for the flourishing of an individual is found solely in relation to God. Obedience becomes a means of affirming one's existence in God, as well as participating in the divine. Ellen Charry describes the dynamic of obedience presented in the Pentateuch (2010:193-194):

> From these texts it is reasonable to conclude that the Pentateuch understands Israel's thriving as its happiness: happiness is enjoying and celebrating a productive and fulfilling life in obedience to the terms of the covenant with God to which Israel agreed at Sinai. Socializing legislation discloses values and virtues that are to be understood dynamically and applied liberally in situations.

Participation in the divine is salvific because an individual's identity is affirmed in God's image (Charry, 2010:159-160). In the Old Testament, soteriology is therapeutic in the restoration of the image of God in humans (Charry, 1997a:99) and in the New Testament, Christians come to know God in an unique way by imitating the way of life set out by Christ (Charry, 2010:241). The knowledge gained through obedience transforms an individual internally evoking an *ashrey* disposition.

A similar theme rings true in Jennifer Herdt's understanding of participation in the divine. Premised on an understanding that grace facilitates the transformation from semblance to virtue, participation in God by means of grace (2012b:119), assigns transcendent value to the present. Reflexivity toward virtue as means of participating in the divine consequently evokes a form of happiness that cannot be reduced or nullified. Ellen Charry and Jennifer Herdt concur in the position that happiness, when understood as affirming relation to God, addresses humanity in a radically different way.

A word of caution might be signalled by Serene Jones in Ellen Charry's use of the language of obedience. In the past, language of obedience has been a primary perpetrator of oppression and violence, especially in light of biblical interpretations of gendered roles such as the household codes (Ephesians 5). In addition, talk of obedience necessarily implied submission, a state where the agency of women was negated. A feminist critical disposition cautions the reader to the possible oppressive logic present in the notion of obedience to a prescribed norm. Charry's account does not take the possible critique levelled by feminists into consideration and falls prey to sweeping statements concerning commandments that were outright oppressive to women. Despite the potential pitfall, Ellen Charry's understanding of obedience seeks to promote a sustainable account of happiness.

Serene Jones provides the tools by which this possible oppressive logic may be negated. The first entails a critical disposition toward the scope and nature of obedience prescribed by Ellen Charry (Jones, 2001c: 299). The second asks how one may conceptualise obedience in order to avoid an image of God that reinforces oppression (Jones, 2001c:302). A re-formulation is needed that has the agency of women in mind. The doctrine of justification and sanctification, with its affirmation of freedom and form (Jones, 2000:63), may serve as useful paradigm to assign agency to women. Grace

establishes a forum that contains the identity and agency of women, while providing her with freedom to construct her identity in relation to God and the community (Jones, 2000:64).

A possible solution for Ellen Charry's account would be to consider the moral shaping function of reverent obedience to God that affirms the agency of women (2010: xii). A salutary reading of obedience enables the reader to avoid a harsh juridical understanding of God's relation with creation. Instead, the moral shaping function of obedience serves to transform character, which establishes a happy disposition (Charry, 1992:33). Obedience as morally shaping entity consequently invigorates an understanding of happiness in its claim to transform character.

A parallel is wrought by Jennifer Herdt, who understands reflexivity to be a means of habituation into virtue. Habituation into virtue takes place as an individual imitates the divine exemplar set by Christ (Whichcote, 2010:284 in Herdt, 2012b:119). The transformation of character progressively inaugurates an individual into relation with God (Herdt, 2012b:119). Herdt accordingly takes the position of reflexivity further by suggesting that daily acts of virtue may initiate the agent into salvation (2012b:119) through grace. In this way, salvation is not an instantaneous rebirth, but is rather progressively pre-empted in the daily acts individuals partake in (Herdt, 2012b: 350).

Ellen Charry's contribution to happiness is substantial in its ability to account for knowledge of God and the pastoral intent of Scripture. In this way, individuals come to enjoy God as they partake in the normative framework established in Scripture. One may perhaps probe Charry's contribution further by inquiring whether *asherism,* firstly, takes into consideration how happiness functions outside of the Christian framework and secondly, whether the happiness experienced by contributing to the common good is a possible means by which individuals are brought into relation with God, a possibility that Jennifer Herdt takes into consideration.

Charry as second voice in the conversation is meaningful as an extra dimension is added to Serene Jones' particular portrayal. Ellen Charry's consideration of happiness as a mother, female theologian and one who writes from past positions of suffering indicates how happiness cannot exist without a reference to the divine. Through obedience, self-love is enabled, whereby an individual may embrace their position before God (Charry, 2010: 157). As knowledge of God is attained through obedience, Christians establish an understanding of happiness that is orientated toward God and creation. In the act of obeying God's commandments, a standard of living is erected that reflects God's will for human flourishing (Charry, 2010: 161). An *asherist* life reflects happiness through a prescribed norm of living that enables Christians to secure their happiness in the enjoyment of God (Charry, 2006a:157). Ellen Charry's account serves as remedy to the divide between goodness and happiness erected by modernity.

Jennifer Herdt illustrates a similar awareness to the separation of virtue from its religious moorings when thinking of happiness. Instead of speaking of a particular knowledge of God like Ellen Charry, she allows the Augustinian anxiety of acquired virtue to lead her to an account of virtue that affirms the agency of individuals (Herdt, 2012b:3). Jennifer Herdt probes further by asking in what ways virtuous action performed pre-empts God's will for humanity and creation to flourish.

Herdt considers in her account the possibility that knowledge of God is implicated in virtuous actions. Knowledge of God is the means through which God initiates human beings into relation with Godself. Grace is indistinguishable from this process, as grace is the means by which humans will eventually come to be transformed by their knowledge of God (Herdt, 2012b: 47). In the instance where individuals unknowingly imitate Christ by acting virtuously, a seed of happiness is sown that extends

beyond the emotion experienced to a transcendent knowledge of God. Secular virtues remain secular however, if the agent is not progressively assimilated to Christ (Herdt, 2012b: 47).

Happiness does not come as result of knowing God first, as Ellen Charry and Serene Jones asserts, but by acting virtuously. Happiness experienced when contributing to the common good, introduces an individual into relation with God. In this manner, acting virtuously might initially be a semblance but extends to a deeper knowledge of the act itself by locating it in God (Herdt, 2012b: 47). Happiness and virtue is given substantial meaning by assigning to it more than obedience to God's commandments as norm for living. Virtuous acting becomes a sign and promise of God's will for creation to flourish.

In the midst of the false divide Ellen Charry seeks to re-establish a link between the simultaneous presence of goodness and God in an individual's life. Goodness occurs in an individual when God's commandments are obeyed. Charry's solution to the divide is to introduce God as initiator of the goodness that must be accomplished in an individual's life. The process may be likened to a top-down approach, where God inspires goodness by ascribing a set of norms for individual's to live by. Goodness is a result of obedience to God's initiative in presenting a reality that might be happy for individuals.

An aspect which has not been taken into consideration by Ellen Charry is morality; how morality may be an indicator of God's initiative to reconcile humanity to Godself through goodness. Jennifer Herdt reformulates the divide by distinguishing it as a divide between morality and truth. Theologians became sceptical of morality in the sixteenth century, when rationality asserted truth to be valid if its premise was logically verifiable (Herdt, 2001b:148). The effect of logical verifiability as prerequisite for morality was a shift away from its religious moorings. Truth that made a particular claim about God's role in humankind was made irrelevant for the workings of morality as means by which God initiates humanity into relationship with Godself.

Jennifer Herdt turns to Nichomachean Ethics and the notion of habituation into virtue to indicate how virtue is a means by which God systematically initiates individuals into relation with Godself. Morality as a separate entity from the truth of God is indicated to be a false dichotomy, as habituation into virtue is a premature realisation of God's truth in the life of an individual. Individuals imitate Christ, who has set a divine example. Gradual assimilation to Christ is enabled by grace, which brings an agent in relation with God. As an individual experiences happiness through acting virtuously, a foretaste is given of relation with God.

In light of Ellen Charry's reconciliation of goodness and God, Jennifer Herdt's appropriation probes further than Charry's, by asking how God is already at work in the lives of individuals who experience happiness. Unlike Charry, Herdt seems to reason that happiness through virtuous acting, irrespective if it is experienced by a Christian or a non-Christian, is a legitimate form of happiness. Individuals may consequently experience the goodness of participation in God without realising it. The process through which individuals finally come to know the source of their happiness is by means of grace (Herdt, 2012b:55).

Happiness in Jennifer Herdt's account is not identified as an external state that comes to bear in an individual when a particular knowledge is acquired. Instead, happiness is already present in the virtues individuals partake in.

The differences in approach emphasise different means of understanding happiness and the role of salvation therein. Ellen Charry's approach presupposes that happiness is experienced when life is

lived in reverent obedience to God. The problem inherent in this logic is the presence of happiness in individuals who do not subscribe to God's commandments. The happiness experienced by individuals who are not Christian threatens to render Charry's conception of happiness void. If happiness experienced by individuals may be legitimate in itself, God as origin of happiness becomes a viable option. Jennifer Herdt affirms this notion through Hauerwas[128], who places the emphasis on the agent instead of the action itself (Hauerwas in Herdt, 2012a:207). When the happiness experienced on earth serves as foretaste of the reality presented in salvation, happiness transforms the individual and brings them into relation with God. The particular formulation of happiness is salvific in nature.

Ellen Charry as second voice in the conversation provides an additional perspective to Serene Jones' affirmation of graced agency and the negation of oppression. Happiness understood soteriologically provides a forum wherein an *asherist* life finds its expression. Happiness is consequently a result of living life excellently, whereby knowledge of God evokes enjoyment of God and life. Serene Jones may be depicted as having the last word with Ellen Charry. As a feminist theologian, Jones may be depicted as asking to what extent the happiness depicted by Ellen Charry allows women to identify positively with happiness.

The impact Ellen Charry's construction of happiness has on female readers might be established by asking whether gender specific roles are assigned to happiness. It may also be asked whether the language used by Ellen Charry is in any way restrictive to the agency of women. Ellen Charry's motivation behind an asherist life is the practicing of God's commandments in order to enable both the self and creation to flourish. A potential difficulty might present itself in the history of reception of God's commandments. Due to the presence of illegitimate interpretations of God's commandments, women have been disadvantaged in the past, an interpretive possibility Ellen Charry does not seem to have taken into consideration. Happiness in the hands of a gender insensitive interpretation of God's commandments may as a result evoke an understanding of happiness that reinforces life-negating circumstances.

A possible answer to the dilemma might come in the universal scope given to the reading of God's commandments. Ellen Charry's approach identifies the reader as autonomous, independent of gendered constructions of women's nature. The approach however, lacks a consideration of the context of the implied audience. In this instance, a woman deconstructed by marginalisation, exploitation, violence, cultural imperialism and powerlessness, does not have the same appreciation for God's commandments when it has in some instances encouraged her oppression (Young in Jones, 2000:80).

One might ask how Serene Jones' re-imagining of the Reformed tradition may serve as resource for thinking about happiness. A possible answer comes in Ellen Charry's emphasis on the pastoral function of Christian doctrine. Christian doctrine established through Scripture serves for Ellen Charry as the framework wherein knowledge of God should evoke healing in the recipient of that knowledge. Knowledge of God attained through commandments is thus to have a salutary effect (Charry, 1998b:379). The feminist critical precondition that all claims made to the lives of women be emancipatory is affirmed in Ellen Charry's understanding of knowledge of God as salutary. Happiness as marked by both a salutary way of knowing God and therapeutic soteriology re-imagines the identity of women by affirming their agency.

[128] Jennifer Herdt's affirmation of Hauerwas is premised on his book, *Character and the Christian Life* which she references as follows: "Hauerwas, Stanley. 1985. *Character and the Christian Life.* 2nd edition. San Antonio, Tex: Trinity University Press." (2012a:225).

The account established through a pastoral approach to happiness does not have the same liberative tone to it as Serene Jones' understanding of flourishing has. Despite the difference in emphases, Charry's construction of happiness does portray a priority toward the human condition. At another level, one would want to dismantle the scope of suffering indicated by Ellen Charry. For instance, if a woman experienced oppression in the form of domestic violence, happiness as a way of life would be an irreconcilable approach to the injustice being done to a female.

A solution is required that affirms the agency of women; one that does not rely on obedience as means to obtain knowledge of God. It may be asked whether Ellen Charry's account of suffering is restricted to a certain type of suffering, such as the loss of a loved one, in contrast to suffering that takes life-negating circumstances into consideration. In the case of the former, happiness as means of living life excellently enables an individual to situate their suffering in light of a greater account of the good life. In the case of the latter, happiness as way of life restricts the liberative agenda present in an account of human flourishing.

Ellen Charry's contribution to the conversation on happiness lies in her consideration that God seeks the flourishing of creation so that God may enjoy creation and creation God.

In the conversation with happiness, Jennifer Herdt introduces a different approach to that of Serene Jones and Ellen Charry, premised on the Augustinian anxiety of acquired virtue (2012b:24). In the process of recollecting ways of thinking about virtue, she negates the presupposition that salvation is a singular event whereby the transformation of character and happiness occurs as result (Herdt, 2012b: 350). Herdt rather alludes to the progressive transformation into salvation through the working of grace in virtue (2012b: 9). Through the voice of Aquinas, Jennifer Herdt highlights the potentiality of acquired virtue to order an individual toward God (2012b: 9). For Aquinas, grace enables human agency, whereby virtue is a gift from God. Erasmus adds to the equation by suggesting that salvation is not an instantaneous surge, but rather a progression toward the perfection of salvation in an individual through conformation to Christ (Herdt, 2012b:76). Human agency is chastened by imitation of Christ and thereafter assimilated to God (Herdt, 2012b:178).

In her consideration of agency and autonomy, Jennifer Herdt makes room for God's initiative to inaugurate an individual into salvation through virtue. Happiness is not founded on salvation as its prerequisite, but rather culminates as an expression of God's initiative to be in relation with humanity. The happiness experienced on earth is intrinsic to virtue as assimilation to Christ takes place. Herdt's account of happiness is never complete in and of itself, for it is dependent on a realisation that virtues enacted are valuable in themselves as representation of human participation in God (1999:47, 50).

The act of conforming to Christ is an effective means of bridging the danger Ellen Charry falls prey to in her emphasis on obedience. Conforming to Christ does not imply a standardised set of principles that must be upheld. To the contrary, conformity presupposes a creative space wherein the example set provides a unique forum for agency to be affirmed. The creative space of re-imagining conformity to Christ's exemplarity alludes to the hermeneutical strategy illustrated by Serene Jones. Conformity to Christ consequently enhances the agency of women, which negates an oppressive logic.

A perspective that the feminist theological lens does bring under scrutiny is Jennifer Herdt's recollection of virtue without taking into consideration how the notion of virtue has in the past served to construct the identity of women. For instance, women in the past were assigned the label of "virtuous" if they kept the household in order and did all the duties that were required of them. A woman may be designated as virtuous even when she practices virtues that negate her agency, a form

of oppression Serene Jones describes as marginalisation. Marginalisation occurs both in the context of the household, as well as the corporate arena (Jones, 2008: 81, 83).

A deep irony marks the account of women who sought to affirm their agency, as they were characterised as being "un-submissive," "rebellious" and "deviant." The possible critique levelled by Serene Jones is unanswerable in the scope of Jenifer Herdt's recollection of virtue in light of happiness. One might also say that the normative framework utilised by Herdt when recollecting the Augustinian anxiety is incompatible with the possible critique. Her emphasis lies not in the virtues assigned to women and men respectively and their function within that context, but rather in the possibility of secular virtues to initiate an individual into relation with God through grace. The difference in approach lies in the distinctive emphases of virtue as potentially restrictive to women's agency and the possibility of virtue to affirm human agency and freedom.

The language of performance utilised by Jennifer Herdt attests to the emphasis on freedom and agency in consideration of virtue. Righteousness is given to an individual in the act of imitating Christ (Herdt, 2012b: 180). Herdt alludes to Erasmus: "For Erasmus, the exercise of human agency involved in the imitation of Christ is at the same time an indwelling of Christ in us and thus a human participation in divine agency" (2012b: 119). The agencies of women are affirmed in their unique expression of virtue as imitation of Christ. The consequent part an individual assumes serves not to diminish agency, but rather to enhance it through participation in the divine.

In light of the possible critique posed at virtue, virtue assumes a transcendent value inaugurated by the freedom presented in Christ. Jennifer Herdt continues to describe the church as a community of believers whose practices shape the Christian character of virtue (2012a:215). In this context, the Augustinian anxiety recedes.

The description of virtue as a gift from God (Herdt, 2012b:57) allows Jennifer Herdt to delve further into the distinctiveness of virtue moulded by the practices of the community of faith. In her opinion, the Aristotelian emphasis on habituation into virtue illustrates how training in virtue occurs (Hauerwas & Pinches, 1997 in Herdt, 2012a:215). A parallel exists between Aristotelian habituation and the progressive transformation that takes place when Christ is imitated. Virtue as gift (Herdt, 2012b:57) breaks free from the secular designation Augustine was weary of, yet does not eliminate God's initiative to inaugurate an individual into participation with God.

Jennifer Herdt's contribution to the conversation with happiness lies in the attempt to shift the emphasis of happiness from consisting in the process by which virtue is acquired to the role of virtue in enabling humanity to participate more fully in God. The act of participation in God enables individuals to contribute to the community of faith through its liturgy and practice, which evokes a sense of happiness. In addition, as secular virtues are utilised to initiate participation in the divine, happiness is experienced. Jennifer Herdt's recollection of virtue presents to the conversation an approach that is distinctive from a feminist theological and pastoral perspective.

One may delineate Jennifer Herdt's process of reasoning as beginning with secular virtue and ending with an understanding of mimetic virtue that is by nature the realisation of happiness on earth (2012b:ix). She begins with the anxiety toward habituation into virtue as pretext for a consideration of participation in God as established through virtue. In the Aristotelian sense, happiness reached its climax when habituation into virtue took place (Herdt, 2012b:23). Herdt moves beyond this position by invoking Aquinas and Erasmus' theatrical understanding of virtue (2012b:61). Erasmus and Aquinas understood earthly virtue as an opportunity to direct humans toward God. Jennifer Herdt

describes virtue by means of grace as a gradual realisation of assimilation to God. When individuals are assimilated to God, virtue as gift is emphasised by affirming the agency and freedom of an individual (Herdt, 2012b:57). Christian virtues that are established through the practices of the church consequently become an alternative reality to which Christians conform.

Serene Jones, Ellen Charry and Jennifer Herdt contribute to the conversation on God and human flourishing by establishing an account of happiness that takes the agency of women and the role of grace in bringing individuals into relation with Godself into consideration. Relation with God is not understood as a momentary event but a progressive assimilation to Christ through identification with the Christian redemptive narrative. Identification with Christ establishes habits of thought that transform character and the way life is lived. Human flourishing is described in such an account as an uncommodified rendition of happiness, where happiness marks the way one's identity is constituted in Christ and the effect such a constituted identity has on the way life is lived.

5.5 Conclusion

In light of the research consideration which understood the God and Human Flourishing Consultations, 2007 to 2013, as an indication of a growing theological conversation on God and human flourishing, three female voices have been presented. From Serene Jones, one learns that relation to God is understood to affirm the role of women as autonomous beings. From Ellen Charry, one hears that relation to God is understood to be constituted through an excellent way of living life. From Jennifer Herdt, one is told that relation to God is understood to be inaugurated by grace through virtuous action.

Serene Jones, as a feminist theologian, presents to the reader an understanding of flourishing as "graced agency." In her sensitivity to the way gendered roles are often assigned to women, she delineates the way women relate to God by affirming the enfolding presence of grace. Grace assigns to women both freedom and form, as represented in the doctrine of justification and sanctification. When women are given a "graced agency", they understand their relation to God in a distinctively different way than when in oppressive circumstances. Co-optation in the redemptive narrative through grace establish habits of thought that transform the way women come to understand their relation with God. Habits of thought that affirm the "graced agency" of women enable a flourishing disposition. Serene Jones consequently affirms that women flourish when their habits of thought are in accordance with their "graced agency."

Ellen Charry, as a female theologian who is concerned with the pastoral intent of knowledge of God, seeks to reunite goodness and happiness as a means of relating to God. When individuals partake in God's commandments, the way of life prescribed by the Old – and New Testaments convey knowledge of God that is intended to transform the agent. A life lived excellently is pleasing both to the agent and to God. Charry understands human relation to God to be a means by which humans come to enjoy God and God creation. Relation to God, marked by mutual enjoyment of God and creation, describes a flourishing disposition in her opinion. Happiness results when individuals live life excellently, knowing that a flourishing disposition is pleasing to God.

Jennifer Herdt, as a virtue ethicist, grounds relation to God in the imitation of Christ's divine exemplar. In the act of imitation, grace assimilates an individual to Christ, enabling participation in the divine. Relation to God as participation in the divine occurs progressively, as individuals conform through virtue to Christ's exemplar. Herdt shifts the emphasis from talk of virtue to talk of the role of the agent of virtue. As individuals contribute to the common good by means of virtues, grace brings humans into relation with God. Her account of flourishing rests on two distinct moments. The first

moment underscores the role of the agent in contributing to the common good by means of virtues. When individuals contribute to the common good, happiness is experienced. Jennifer Herdt does not distinguish between the "legitimacy" of the account of happiness given when understood in light of virtue. The second moment understands flourishing as the moment where individuals are progressively brought into relation with God through grace.

In order to understand the rationale of the three female voices five processes are identified which describe how the human relation to God is understood to be reason for human flourishing. By identifying five processes present in each contribution the nuances and differences are emphasised. The five processes illustrates how each theological contribution seeks to delineate a "graced agency," "happiness" and "virtue" in light of God's relation to creation. The five processes are: (1) the identification of an unsatisfactory disposition or dilemma that is characteristically insufficient in describing a preferred norm. (2) A description of the implications of such a dilemma followed while suggesting an alternative. (3) Establishing the preconditions for an alternative, (4) was accompanied by an exposition of the suggested alternatives. (5) The appropriation of the alternative to the desired norm.

Serene Jones used the language of performance to denote how identification and relation is made possible. Ellen Charry believes obedience to God's commandments to be the norm that enables an excellent and enjoyable life before God. Jennifer Herdt used the language of imitation to show how individuals are gradually transformed when they are brought into relation with God. A flourishing disposition is accordingly understood as one where the agency of women is affirmed, where an excellent life is enjoyable to humans and God and where an individual is brought into relation with God through grace.

A variegated reading of human happiness and flourishing, where the nuances and differences are identified in each theological contribution, has been illustrated in a reading of Serene Jones, Ellen Charry and Jennifer Herdt. Serene Jones's priority for the agency of women underscores the feminist critical lens with which the notion of flourishing is understood. Jones' concern lies with doctrines that negate the flourishing of women by providing them with patterns of thought that are contrary to God's will that creation flourish. The result is an emphasis on flourishing that takes how relation to God is to affirm the freedom and form of women into consideration. Ellen Charry's emphasis falls on the extent to which goodness should be simultaneously affirmed with happiness. When goodness and happiness are not understood to be unified, an account of human flourishing is impoverished. An account of happiness is given substance when the way life is lived excellently is understood to bring enjoyment to God. Jennifer Herdt is concerned with the divorce of morality from its religious moorings. The divide between religion and morality shifted the emphasis from talk of the agent to talk of virtue. Herdt deems this unsatisfactory, as virtuous action was no longer understood to be the forum wherein grace progressively initiates the agent into relation with God. Jennifer Herdt uses the language of liturgies to establish a new rendition of virtue and agency. Through Christian liturgies, individuals come to partake in the Christian virtues. Christian virtues do not function separately from "secular" virtues, but rather contribute to the process of being assimilated to Christ.

A converging conversation has sought to show how each perspective is valid in its own right and is a means by which accounts of flourishing and happiness may be challenged and critiqued. Serene Jones could be imagined to critique Ellen Charry's use of the language of obedience, which may negate the agency of women. Jennifer Herdt's use of the language of virtue was challenged as it harbours the possibility of reinforcing the marginalisation of women. The Augustinian anxiety of acquired virtue drew the attention of the reader to the potential of performances to remain semblances. Ellen Charry

similarly challenged a rendition of flourishing that did not have the transformation of character as a priority in a reading of "graced agency." Forms of knowing God should therefore enable a flourishing disposition as way of life.

With regards to the growing conversation on God and human flourishing, three female voices have been presented as possible conversation partners where each voice was allowed to speak in its own right. A richly textured account of human flourishing has come to the fore where grace, happiness and virtue have been unpacked conceptually. The richly textured account affirms the notion that human flourishing is deeply contextual and embodied. For this reason, further research and conceptualisation is encouraged in order to investigate theology's engagement with happiness and human flourishing.

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